

Chapter Five

Response to Comments on the Draft EIS

CHAPTER FIVE

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIS

	Copy of letter begins on Page:
1. Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development	5-35
2. Washington State Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation	5-38
3. King County Water and Land Resources Division – Daryl Grigsby	5-39
4. King County Department of Transportation – Metro Transit Division	5-41
5. Seattle Planning Commission	5-49
6. Belltown Community Council – John Pehrson, John Lombard	5-56
7. Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association	5-59
8. Downtown Seattle Association	5-62
9. Historic Seattle	5-64
10. League of Women Voters	5-68
11. People for Puget Sound	5-71
12. 1,000 Friends of Washington	5-73
13. Michael Baker	5-75
14. Marshall N. Brown	5-77
15. Jonathan Dubman	5-78
16. Robert F. Hintz	5-79
17. Douglas Howe	5-80
18. William Justen	5-82
19. Alan Kurimura	5-85
20. Jack McCullough	5-86
21. Jack McCullough (#2)	5-95
22. Steve Mooney	5-108
23. Tony Puma	5-109
24. Greg Smith	5-110
25. John Smith	5-111
26. Scott Species	5-112
27. Richard Stevenson	5-115
28. Roger Wagoner	5-117
29. Irene Wall	5-119
30. David Williams	5-121

This chapter includes written comment letters that are reproduced beginning on page 5-35, and City staff's responses to identified comments within those letters. The letters include those comments that were received during the official comment period on the Draft EIS. The responses below generally identify the topic of the written comment, and seek to clarify or expand upon the analysis presented in the Draft EIS, for topics relevant to SEPA environmental impacts.

Letter 1

Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

1. Thank you for your comments and recommendations for mitigation strategies.
2. Your recommendations to take steps to preserve existing affordable and market rate housing resources and create additional units are noted.
3. Your recommendations regarding open space are noted. Currently, Downtown office developments are required to provide specified amounts of open space for use by building occupants, which can be accommodated on rooftops or in other locations on the project site, or, under special circumstances, as public open space off-site. Additional commercial floor area can also be gained through bonuses for projects providing various types of open space for general public use. Residential development is also required to provide specified amounts of common recreation area for use by building residents. In the Denny Triangle, special provisions allow residential and mixed-use projects to add floor area above current height limits provided that contributions are made to an amenity fund to be used for public open space improvements in the neighborhood.

The amount of additional space anticipated under these requirements given growth projections assumed in this analysis is provided in Appendix J of the Draft EIS. Under the Preferred Alternative, the amount of additional open space anticipated would be most similar to conditions under Alternative 1.

4. Thank you for your comments and recommendations regarding transportation impact mitigation.
5. Thank you for your comments. Please see the response to Letter 2.
6. Thank you for your comments regarding growth management, community preservation and development. Please see Chapters 1 and 2 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives.

Letter 2

Washington State Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

1. Thank you for your comments on preservation of historic buildings and properties, and suggested mitigation strategies. Prior to investigation of the alternatives in the Draft EIS, incentives for landmark preservation in the Downtown Code were reviewed, including landmark transfer of development rights (TDR), and the Downtown Bonus and TDR provisions were recently amended to increase the effectiveness of these tools in areas where landmark structures would be most threatened by development pressures. Among the outcomes of these revisions was the creation of a City-sponsored TDR bank that enables the City to purchase and bank TDRs from the owner of a designated landmark structure who may wish to sell them before a private party is available to purchase them for a new project. Furthermore, if landmark TDRs are available in the bank, new projects exceeding certain floor area thresholds would be required to purchase the TDRs to gain a specified amount of the added floor area. While the City does not currently offer specific protections

to undesignated structures, provisions for within-block TDR enable any existing structure to transfer unused development rights to another site within the same block as an incentive to maintain a variable scale of development in an area.

Historic preservation is an important aspect of planning for the future of Downtown. Decisionmaking processes will continue to consider the input of preservation professionals and local preservation entities.

Letter 3

King County Water and Land Resources Division – Daryl Grigsby

1. Your comments regarding the effects of certain alternatives on the Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program are noted. The information on outstanding funding amounts related to TDC is also acknowledged. Please see Chapters 1 and 2 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives. The discussion of impacts is revised to acknowledge that an additional impact of eliminating the program would be the loss of funds the County and other agencies have earmarked for amenities in the Denny Triangle neighborhood in exchange for participation in the TDC program. Under the Preferred Alternative, the proposed changes in the height limits in the Denny Triangle would result in the termination of the TDC program.
2. Thank you for your comments regarding pending projects considering development rights transfers.

Letter 4

King County Department of Transportation – Metro Transit Division

1. Thank you for your comments. Your comments throughout the letter addressing smart growth and transportation mitigation strategies are noted. It is agreed there is a public interest in managing transportation demand and fostering transit using a variety of strategies. Over the past several years, the Seattle Department of Transportation has developed transportation plans and strategies for the Center City to move more people using transportation modes such as bus, light rail, monorail, ferries, streetcars and bicycle and pedestrian networks within the Center City. A key piece of this work is the Center City Access Strategy which presents multi-modal transportation improvements that accommodate projected growth Downtown and meet the City's Comprehensive Plan goals.
2. In order to provide for a meaningful comparison of impacts among the alternatives, the EIS compared the effects of 20 years worth of growth. For this time period, the differences among the alternatives in terms of population and employment growth are not expected to significantly vary. The real estate consultant report concludes that employment growth will be determined largely by factors other than zoning, related to larger economic trends.
3. The Draft EIS includes assumptions about growth in South Lake Union as part of its analyses for transportation and energy impacts. It also implicitly assumes that employment and residential growth will occur as was projected for growth management and regional traffic analysis purposes at the time of the transportation analysis.
4. Your comments on the extent of the transit study in the EIS are noted. It is acknowledged that several corridors, in addition to Stewart Street and Olive Way, provide significant transit service. The Seattle Department of Transportation (in consultation with Metro King County) is developing a plan for Seattle's future transit network including important transit corridors and transfer points. The plan has identified an "Urban Village Transit Network (UVTN)" that is the backbone of the City's transit

network and will deliver the highest quality transit services in the city. Performance standards are associated with this network.

5. Your comments on the challenges of serving the Denny Triangle with sufficient transit are noted. The Seattle Transit Plan being developed by the Seattle Department of Transportation identifies transit service needs to address future growth projections. The Center City Access Strategy includes a detailed transit network to address the entire Center City area. It is acknowledged that current Metro revenue projections will not be sufficient to meet future transit demand associated with growth projections under all alternatives.
6. Your comments regarding strategic needs for maintaining or improving transit service are noted. It is acknowledged that reducing travel delay for transit, effective routes into/out of the northern CBD and high-capacity transit access are important needs that will require significant resources. In addition to the transit priority options presented on Draft EIS pages 3-191 through 3-193 (for an updated version see the Mitigation Strategies section at the end of Chapter 4 in this Final EIS), Seattle Department of Transportation has developed additional options for mitigating future transit delay. These strategies can be found in the Center City Access Strategy and supporting reports and plans. SDOT will continue to work with King County Metro to develop and implement these measures within the Center City.
7. Thank you for the updated information on layover spaces. Your interest in maintaining effective layover space in the north Downtown area is noted. Layover space is an important street use, and potential incompatibilities should be identified and avoided as possible. To address this issue, the Seattle Department of Transportation and King County Metro have begun a north Downtown Seattle bus layover study to develop interim and long-term plans for managing existing bus layover spaces, for accommodating service growth and future bus layover requirements. The Preferred Alternative requests consideration of an incentive in the Land Use Code for commercial developments that would accommodate layover space on a development site.
8. As part of Downtown Seattle, the Denny Triangle's streets are designated using Downtown's system for pedestrian requirements, amenities and street level uses. Some of the streets in the Denny Triangle have Class I pedestrian requirements, some have Class II requirements, and some are Green Streets with special requirements. The required sidewalk widths range from 12 feet to 18 feet in width. It is possible that pedestrian requirements could be upgraded as part of code changes associated with this proposal. Your suggestions for fostering more pedestrian walkways, thoroughfares and open space are acknowledged.
9. Your suggestions for parking-related strategies, including deleting parking minimums, simplifying parking reduction processes, a transportation mitigation fund, and adjusting current allowable reductions, are noted. The Preferred Alternative would eliminate minimum parking requirements for non-residential uses. No minimum parking requirement currently exists for residential uses. Maximum parking requirements also exist in the zones being considered for zoning changes.
10. Your suggestions for incorporating transportation in height bonuses are noted. The types of public benefits provided through floor area incentives reflect a prioritization resulting from major policy decisions that were based on considerable public input. The most recent Council actions modifying the Bonus and TDR programs have established the provision of low-income affordable housing and child care facilities as the highest priority for use of development incentives in Downtown. Other high priority items include provision of public open space and landmark preservation. The Preferred Alternative does include an addition to the existing transit facilities bonus for transit tunnel station access, to expand it to include access to all fixed-rail systems and for construction of transit layover

facilities. Improved provisions regarding bicycle facilities are also included in the Preferred Alternative. Adding new incentives which could ultimately compete with these other public benefits would require decisionmakers to balance competing policy objectives.

11. Your preferred approach to mitigation strategies, including developers as constructive partners, is noted. Please see the response to comment 9 above, regarding parking regulations. The Preferred Alternative does offer incentives to encourage housing in new development as suggested in your comment. Also, see new text in mitigation strategies for Transportation (under Demand Reduction Strategies) regarding the role of mixed-use development in mitigating transportation impacts from future development. Further discussion of the potential for public-private partnerships is also presented (see the Mitigation Strategies section at the end of Chapter 4 of this Final EIS).
12. Please see Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative and recommended transportation mitigation strategies.
13. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 5

Seattle Planning Commission

1. Figure 1 on page 1-3 of the Draft EIS provides the clearest portrayal of the boundary of the Belltown neighborhood and the study area (shown in three different shading patterns). Differences among the alternatives' development patterns in Figure 17 are hard to spot due to the graphics' small size, but the figure allows for visual comparisons on one page. Figures 18 through 24 provide additional textual and visual information that clarifies differences among the alternatives.
2. Thank you for your comments. None of the studied alternatives are a specific package of zone changes meant to achieve all of the Mayor's objectives. The document was prepared in response to neighborhood plan proposals for accommodating growth targets established for the Downtown area in the city's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1994. Decisionmaking processes will determine what changes, if any, occur. However, please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for further discussion of a Preferred Alternative.
3. Thank you for your comments on the recommended features of a Preferred Alternative. See Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the recommended alternative for adoption.
4. Your comments on mitigation strategies are noted. The mitigation strategies discussions in each section of Draft EIS Chapter 3 are suitably detailed in describing the options that could be employed to address the identified impacts. For example, see pages 3-102 through 3-105 in the Draft EIS. This level of detail is more than sufficient to meet the SEPA requirements for a non-project EIS. Further, the Preferred Alternative discussed in this Final EIS represents a set of actions that incorporates several of the suggested mitigation strategies.
5. Discussion of the TDC program is provided in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIS, where the relative impacts of the four alternatives on the program are discussed in the Housing (pages 3-18, 19) and Urban Design sections, and in Appendix J, where the dollar value of funds generated for amenities in the area is presented based on projected residential development expected to take advantage of the option for increased height. Established as a pilot program in late 1999, the TDC program is relatively new and was adopted at the beginning of an economic downturn. Consequently, there has been little development activity of any sort to provide a meaningful evaluation of the market's response to the

program. Several projects have, however, explored the use of TDC, three of which have active permit applications, and one of these projects now under construction has increased floor area through the purchase of conservation credits. Further, as part of the interlocal agreement between the City and County, the County has already expended funds for public amenity improvements in the Denny Triangle, and has committed additional resources for amenities once development credits are purchased.

6. Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS (also Chapter 2 in this Final EIS) includes detailed discussion of the background, rationales and approaches for each of the alternatives. The Relationship to Plan and Policies discussion in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIS essentially is a presentation of the pros and cons of the alternatives with respect to the Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plan goals. Draft EIS Appendix H presents more plan and policy analysis. Further derivation of pros and cons for the sake of decisionmaking would be helpful, but is not necessary in this EIS. Also, it risks overly reducing the numerous complexities within each topic that may make simple pro/con comparisons difficult. Please see Chapters 1 and 2 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Alternatives, including a Preferred Alternative.
7. This comment touches on several “bigger-picture” topics related to commercial and residential growth. The specific questions suggest that precise analysis is possible on those topics. However, the complex and intertwined nature of the subject matter encourage a more qualitative level of response. Please refer to the Relationship of Plans and Policies discussion in the Draft EIS, page 3-61, and to Appendix H, for further discussion

The comment’s first premise is that this EIS should assess the impact of what happens if the analyzed development does not occur in Downtown Seattle. Strictly speaking, this topic is not within the purview of the EIS, which analyzes the impacts of what happens if the growth does occur in Downtown. More specifically, the analysis explores how different zoning scenarios might differently accommodate 20 years of growth, and impacts related to those differences. The EIS analysis tends to contradict this comment’s underlying assumption that different choices among the alternatives might result in growth shifts away from Downtown to other neighborhoods or regional cities. The real estate consultant’s analysis for this EIS indicates that the contemplated changes in zoned height and density are not expected to alter 20-year growth projections for Downtown.

Identifying and supporting findings of zoning-related impacts such as regional or intracity shifts in projected growth would require much more analysis than is possible within the scope of this EIS, and would likely remain speculative in nature. Please see the responses to comments 8 and 9 of this letter, and discussion in Chapter 3 of this Final EIS.

The analysis indicates that all of the contemplated growth can be accommodated within Downtown through 2020. However, it is interesting to note that the Alternatives do have different implications for the long-term capacity of growth Downtown. Among the alternatives, a range of approximately 26-30 years worth of residential growth could be accommodated, and a range of approximately 37-48 years worth of commercial growth could be accommodated under the zoning studied for the Alternatives. Alternative 1 would result in the greatest level of commercial capacity (48 years) but the least level of residential capacity (26 years). Under the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS, changes to employment and residential capacity would be expected to fall roughly between those identified in the Draft EIS for Alternatives 1 and 2. The EIS findings on long-term capacity generally suggest that the City should begin to plan for “what happens next” in accommodating Downtown growth after 2020, particularly for residential uses.

The Draft EIS described ranges of possible Downtown residential and employment growth: roughly 11,000 to 17,500 new households and 50,000 to 70,000 new employees by 2020 (see pages 3-6 to 3-8 in the Draft EIS). Supporting the acceptability of those estimates are the use of multiple sources (including Puget Sound Regional Council forecasts), a perspective based on decades of Downtown real estate market trends, and an understanding of the trends affecting residential and employment growth in Downtown. The high end of these ranges should represent an optimistic yet reasonable maximum of potential growth Downtown by 2020. This relatively aggressive growth rate was assumed to ensure that the environmental analysis would be valid in terms of adequately disclosing impacts. It is unlikely that 20-year population or employment trends will dramatically vary from the ranges studied in the EIS, but if employment and household growth occurs in the lower end of the ranges, the impacts on Downtown would be somewhat less than the identified maximum impacts.

Additional requested analysis about housing markets, including markets for family-oriented uses is beyond the scope of this EIS.

8. It is acknowledged that the achievement of population and employment growth projections in Downtown will be influenced by many factors related to macroeconomic trends, demographic trends, real estate market and financial trends, as well as private sector choices about development and public sector choices related to planning, economic development and regulations.
9. The primary implications of the Draft EIS findings relate to the Alternatives' varying impacts on Denny Triangle's future commercial and residential development. Alternative 3, for example, would accommodate more residential development than Alternative 1, providing approximately four years worth of additional residential growth capability if the capacity is fully used. Alternative 3 would also reorient zoning in certain portions of the study area to better encourage that some areas develop as "residential enclaves." On the other hand, zoning choices in Alternative 1 would tend to promote more of a commercial character to the land use pattern of the Denny Triangle, which would more greatly emphasize its role as an employment center. Changes under the Preferred Alternative would most closely approximate Alternative 2.

See the response to comment 7 in this letter regarding growth shifts. The potential that growth may occur in South Lake Union or Northgate should not be assumed as a negative impact on Downtown, or vice-versa. All of the urban centers inside and outside the City have growth targets, and it may take decades for those areas (including Downtown) to reach their full growth potential. Even if studies of growth shifts might be worthwhile, there would be numerous "push" and "pull" factors involved (both are cited in this comment) as well as uncertain implications of macroeconomic factors and private sector decisionmaking factors about development. The net results would inevitably contain a lot of speculation. This sort of study is beyond the scope of this EIS.

Whatever the selected zoning strategy is, Seattle's goals and policies indicate it should not place the Downtown Urban Center in a non-competitive position for growth compared to other areas inside or outside the City. The zoning should be established consistent with those policies so that the intended outcome for future Downtown growth is supported.

With respect to the TDC program, King County indicates that the elimination of the program (which would occur under the Preferred Alternative) could have an appreciable impact on the ability to preserve open space outside the urban center (see the responses to the letter from the King County Water and Land Resources Division for further discussion).

10. The Draft EIS analyses are the best source to rely upon for evaluative discussion of the alternatives' housing impact implications. Two timeframes are considered—20 years of growth (2000 to 2020), and the long-term.

As noted on page 3-19, over 20 years about 45,385 new housing units would need to be built in the region to accommodate new households attracted by new Downtown jobs. An extended forecast based on an ERA economic study suggests a 20-year demand for approximately 17,500 (40%) of these new housing units in Downtown Seattle. To illustrate possible distribution of that growth, the City's Comprehensive Plan growth "planning estimates" suggest that approximately one-half of Downtown's residential growth over 20 years would occur in those neighborhoods that are outside the EIS study area (Pioneer Square, International District and Belltown). The EIS analyses conclude that proposed zoning changes would not alter the projected 20-year demand for commercial or residential uses under any of the alternatives. Therefore, there is no evidence to conclude that 20-year housing demand would be affected within Downtown neighborhoods or that there might be shifts in residential growth or demand.

Over the long-term, prospective residential growth demands could have positive implications for the ability of Pioneer Square, International District and Belltown to achieve additional housing growth. If there is sustained long-term demand for Downtown housing (likely related to Downtown employment growth), increasingly limited availability of sites with residential development capacity is likely to encourage residential development in those neighborhoods outside the EIS study area. Comparatively lower land values in some of those areas would also possibly contribute to that growth trend. It would be logical to assume that lower land values would also attract the interest of non-profits and other affordable housing developers toward further development in those neighborhoods.

For quantitative evaluation, refer to Tables 16 and 17 in the Draft EIS (page 3-18). These show the maximum potential Downtown residential development capacity, including the neighborhood areas within Downtown but outside the EIS study area. Table 17 compares the residential development capacity to the projected number of new households that could be generated by buildout of redevelopable commercial properties Downtown. This illustrates much more potential demand for housing than can be satisfied Downtown, and that neighborhoods including Pioneer Square, International District and Belltown possess a bit more than one-half of the potential residential development capacity Downtown. This information seemingly bodes well for the prospects of demand for future housing development in all parts of Downtown.

11. Regarding the likelihood of housing development occurring in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones, the analysis in the Draft EIS reflects the real estate consultant's assumptions that property owners in the future will seek to maximize development opportunities for both uses, where possible. While commercial development will likely be the primary choice for development in these zones, in situations where the permitted zoning envelope allows additional development potential beyond what is required to accommodate the maximum permitted density of commercial use, the assumption is that developers will increasingly seek to maximize the value of their sites by including other uses, like housing. Examples include a few hotel/condominium proposals currently in the permitting process.
12. The Draft EIS Housing section already analyzes potential impacts on existing subsidized housing (see page Draft EIS page 3-22, "Potential loss of housing to redevelopment" regarding Alternative 1) and illustrates a range of potential Downtown bonus-based resources generated by 20 years of development (see Table 18 on Draft EIS page 3-21).
13. Regarding edge impacts on housing and smaller scale development in Belltown, in the Chapter 3 *Urban Design -- Height, Bulk and Scale* section, the Draft EIS describes the relative bulk and scale

impacts of the four alternatives on sensitive transition areas, identified on Figure 19, which include the southern and eastern edges of Belltown.

14. Thank you for your comments. Please see Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for additional discussion of the Preferred Alternative, which is intended to fulfill the height and bulk objectives expressed by the Mayor.
15. The discussion of impacts on historic resources in the Draft EIS includes consideration of structures that are not currently designated as landmarks, in three paragraphs plus an accompanying table. Given the nature of the statements made in those paragraphs and the fact that the information was presented, the Draft EIS did adequately identify and consider those impacts. These structures are listed on page 3-52 of the Draft EIS. See the response to comment 1 in Letter 9 below for a list of 12 other buildings identified by Historic Seattle that are located within the study area.

The sources used to identify these structures include neighborhood plans, where “icon” buildings and “character buildings” of special interest to the community were identified, a survey of buildings in the Denny Triangle conducted as part of The Seattle Commons/South Lake Union Plan Final EIS that identified “buildings or sites likely to meet Landmarks or National Register criteria,” and a list by the City of “buildings or sites of community importance that may meet Landmarks or National Register Criteria.” Altogether, 21 structures not currently designated as Landmarks were identified by these sources. Impacts of the various alternatives on structures that accommodate affordable housing are addressed under Housing impacts (see Draft EIS pages 3-22 through 3-27).

16. Comments noted. Impacts on the costs of land are outside the scope of environmental impacts required to be reviewed under SEPA. The impacts on “sensitive transition areas,” including the Pike Place Market and Belltown are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIS, under “Urban Design.” A specific location in this area at First Avenue and Virginia Street was also modeled to illustrate potential impacts of the different alternatives in this area.
17. The Preferred Alternative presented in this Final EIS would continue to support the concept of transitions due to the arrangement of zones with zones stepping down in intensity toward the edges of Downtown, and mixed commercial zones located between the more intensive core zones and the less intensive residential zones. See Chapters 1, 3 and 4 for additional discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
18. Comments noted. The response to these comments lies in describing the nature of the alternatives, and noting the pertinent Draft EIS impact text and the discussion of mitigation strategies. Alternative 3 in the Draft EIS provided a strategy for better achieving residential environments than would be possible under Alternatives 1, 2 or the No Action Alternative. These latter alternatives would not possess zoning characteristics that would particularly contribute to the achievement of desirable residential areas. The impact analysis on Draft EIS pages 3-90 through 3-98 indicated these comparisons among the alternatives. Other portions of the Height, Bulk and Scale analyses further indicate the physical circumstances that, particularly in the Denny Triangle, would tend to work against street environments desirable for residential development. Subsequently, the Mitigation Strategies section on Draft EIS pages 3-102 through 3-105 provide a variety of strategies that could be adopted for those purposes. It is agreed that the selection of strategies to achieve such goals should be intentional in the way that height, bulk and scale would work, and that design guidelines could be beneficial.

The Preferred Alternative would accommodate residential use particularly in portions of the DMC zone where raising height limits for residential use without increasing commercial density limits, and

a new provision allowing the transfer of commercial development rights from sites committed to the development of housing, may encourage more properties to be developed with residential and mixed-use buildings. The additional height, along with improved controls on building bulk may also encourage slimmer building types. Impacts on light/shadow, sense of enclosure and similar concerns about massing may be addressed during Design Review of individual proposals, and/or could be the subject of mitigation strategies that could be selected by decisionmakers.

19. Because the perception of differences in development scale between the alternatives is minimal from many vantage points, the graphics in the Draft EIS focused on presenting a broader overview to illustrate variations in the impacts of the Alternatives, which most significantly was the number and location of projects rather than differences in their overall size. Within the constraints of budget, the Draft EIS did present street level views and perspectives from nearby viewpoints. This Final EIS, plus other materials likely to be presented to the public and decisionmakers, will contain additional graphic information intended to represent view and aesthetic interests.
20. Assessing impacts of alley vacations at a detailed level in an analysis of this nature is complicated because each case requires special review resulting in specific conditions addressing the particular impacts of a vacation at a particular location. Both the conditions and an individual project's response to them are difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate. The analysis in both the Draft and Final EIS assumes that, consistent with past development practices, under certain conditions, some large sites will be created through alley vacations, influencing the overall scale of development possible. Under various zoning schemes, development of a certain size and configuration will be accommodated on these sites, which will have certain generalized impacts on the surrounding area.
21. The purpose of the Draft EIS was to evaluate the impacts of proposals developed to implement goals and policies established through the Downtown Neighborhood Planning Process. Pages 3-124 and 3-125 of the Draft EIS (as well as some others on pages 3-102 through 3-105) describe a variety of strategies that could aid in shaping pedestrian and open space environments. The specific objectives guiding the development of the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS are presented in Chapter 1 of this Final EIS. See Chapters 1 and 3 of this Final EIS for additional discussion of how the Preferred Alternative relates to these topics.
22. Comments noted. The Draft EIS on pages 3-124 and 3-125 identifies a variety of possible open space planning strategies, several of which require future research and analysis or are future possible actions unrelated to this proposal. Due to the finding that no mitigation measures are required as mandatory actions for this EIS, it is not necessary to conduct a detailed assessment of these or other innovative open space strategies. While the value of additional research and planning for open space is acknowledged, it is beyond the scope of this EIS to develop measures of open space demand/need, other than the goals currently established in the Comprehensive Plan and the Department of Parks and Recreation's *Complan*.
23. Please see the response comment 5 in this letter.
24. Comment noted. The Urban Design and Views and Aesthetics sections of this EIS comprise a reasonably detailed set of analyses that address the relevance of visual open space and the impacts of the studied alternatives. More detailed analysis of visual open space and effective strategies for better public and private open space is beyond the scope of this EIS, but would be a worthwhile task for future planning. See Chapters 1, 3 and 4 and Appendix C of this Final EIS for additional discussion of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative includes strategies for encouraging slimmer buildings and better controlling building bulk. If adopted, this should benefit the streetscape

pedestrian environment, the broader visual scenic environment as experienced at various viewpoints and overall livability of the Downtown environment.

25. Based on updated information from City Light, ongoing capacity planning currently indicates that a new substation serving Downtown would be needed after 2020. City Light's capacity planning will continue in 2005 and be updated over time.
26. Additional detailed assessment of water and sewer system infrastructure needs and funding is beyond the scope of this EIS. The Water Utility and Sewer/Stormwater Utilities sections of the Draft EIS identified only a limited number of utility issues, for which the impacts of the alternatives are likely to be minor. Therefore, additional analysis is not warranted for the purposes of this EIS. However, Seattle Public Utilities continues to explore the long-term needs of its systems.
27. The Department of Planning and Development has compiled 2000 U.S. Census data for the City's Urban Centers and Urban Villages, at www.cityofseattle.gov, including "journey to work" and automobile ownership data. The data confirm expectations that Downtown residents are less likely to own an automobile, are somewhat more likely to use transit, and are much more likely to walk to work than residents in other parts of Seattle. A majority of the households in the Downtown Urban Center did not own an automobile in 2000, and the average vehicles available per household was 0.5. This is similar to the assumption used for the parking analysis of 0.63 vehicles per household that was based on the 1990 U.S. Census. Almost one-quarter of the Downtown households used public transit to commute in 2000, while 36% walked to work. Only about 16% of the Downtown households worked outside the City of Seattle.

These data suggest that Downtown residency enables a considerably greater proportion of residents to avoid using an automobile for commuting to and from work, compared to the rest of Seattle. This helps Downtown residents contribute less per-capita to congestion on the regional transportation network, and represents a more efficient pattern of residential growth than suburban-style growth.

As described in the Draft EIS, the commuting choices of Downtown employees are assumed to be consistent with the Puget Sound Regional Council's "mode share" information in its 2020 travel demand model. This model projects that in 2020 about 33% of Downtown-oriented trips will be made using transit modes, compared to the estimated 20% in current conditions.

28. The precise location of alley vacations is not predicted in this EIS. Impacts of alley vacations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Presumably, an alley vacation would not be approved unless conditioned to ensure that the project would not result in significant adverse impacts. If alleys were eliminated, the loading and access functions they provide would need to be provided in other configurations. Depending upon how streets and buildings are designed and the levels of passing traffic, different configurations could contribute to additional congestion on City streets and/or additional potential for conflicts with pedestrians and other vehicles.
29. The current Downtown zoning is restrictive in the treatment of principal-use structured parking. Principal-use garages for long-term parking are prohibited in much of the study area, and are only permitted as conditional uses in the Denny Triangle area and along the edge of Interstate 5. Conditions for approval address impacts on traffic and pedestrian circulation.

The Draft EIS addresses the potential impact on streetscape character of above-grade structured parking accessory to other uses (see discussion of impacts on residential character in Chapter 3 Urban Design – Height, Bulk and Scale and impacts on streetscape and pedestrian amenity in Chapter 3 Urban Design – Pedestrian Amenities and Open Space). The presence of parking is especially an

issue in the DMC zones and for residential development in all zones, in part because the floor area at or above grade that is occupied by parking does not count as chargeable FAR in these instances. Therefore, there is no incentive to minimize the impacts of parking on the streetscape by locating it below-grade where it is exempt from floor area calculations. In the Preferred Alternative, however, long-term commuter parking located at or above grade would count as chargeable floor area in those DMC areas where commercial density limits would be increased. Furthermore, eliminating the minimum parking requirement may reduce the amount of parking provided in future structures.

Where parking is provided at or above street level, it is subject to development standards based on the pedestrian street designation that applies to streets abutting the project site. Parking at street level must be separated from the street by another use along the frontages of streets designated as Class I Pedestrian Streets and Green Streets, and for portions of the frontage of streets designated Class II Pedestrian Streets. On all floors above street level, parking must be screened. In the Preferred Alternative, residential parking provided above grade on larger sites would need to be separated along some portions of the street frontage by another use.

30. Thank you for your comments. Please see Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative.

Letter 6
Belltown Community Council – John Pehrson, John Lombard

1. Thank you for your comments on alternatives for zoning in the studied portion of Belltown, and zoning regulations affecting bulk and scale. Specific provisions in the Preferred Alternative that address the issues related to the bulk of residential structures in Belltown include maximum limits on floor sizes above specified elevations and maximum limits on the width of facades.
2. Thank you for your comments. Please see Chapters 1-4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives, including the Preferred Alternative in Chapter 1.
3. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 7
Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association

1. Thank you for your comments on the intent of the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan.
2. Thank you for your comments on the relationship of this proposal to the 2001 Downtown TDR and Bonus system changes.
3. The recommendations in the Draft EIS for Alternative 1 are taken directly from the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan, to the extent that the plan provided specific information. Height increases of 100 feet were recommended throughout the area, and base and maximum FAR increases to 7 and 14 respectively were proposed for the DOC 2 zone. While specific FAR limits were not identified for the DMC zone, the plan indicated that the increases should be similar in relative magnitude to those for DOC 2, so the base FAR was increased from 5 to 7 and the maximum FAR increased from 7 to 10. This assumption is consistent with recommendations made by the Advisory Committee reviewing changes to the bonus and TDR programs that were to be considered in conjunction with recommended height and density increases. While the plan does call for increasing potential for commercial development, it also specifies objectives to “encourage a mix of low, moderate and

market rate affordable housing throughout the neighborhood with project specific mixes of commercial and residential development,” and to “encourage a 'residential enclave' of predominantly residential development along key green streets ...”

4. Analysis of the Draft EIS alternatives suggests that the proportionally higher increase in proposed commercial density relative to height in some zones would not likely remedy concerns about buildings that appear excessively bulky. The Final EIS includes proposals for a relationship between height and density increases and treatment of building bulk that will address this issue.
5. Thank you for your comments on Alternative 2.
6. Thank you for your comments on Alternative 3.
7. Thank you for your comments on the TDC program. In addition to allowing increased height for residential and mixed-use development and providing a mechanism for channeling resources to fund public amenities in the Denny Triangle, the program also resulted in upzoning approximately four acres of land from DMC 240' to DOC 2 300' to accommodate increased employment growth, consistent with Denny Triangle Plan proposals. The TDC program was created as a pilot project, and is scheduled to be reviewed to determine whether it should be extended or terminated in July 30, 2005. Under the Preferred Alternative, the TDC program would be terminated.
8. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 8

Downtown Seattle Association – Kate Joncas

1. Thank you for your comments on the scope of the alternatives and ongoing “Center City” planning topics. This EIS reflects up-to-date consideration of the status and needs of Downtown.
2. Thank you for your comments regarding transportation investments and Downtown as a continuing growth center. The traffic modeling used in the Draft EIS assumed the presence of major transportation improvements (except the proposed streetcar) to accommodate significantly greater transit ridership in the future.
3. The Draft EIS strove to provide a balanced evaluation of impacts on streetscape and pedestrian amenity (see pages 3-112 to 3-114 and 3-119 to 3-121). This included listing several positive impacts that would occur with future development, such as widening of sidewalks, additional Green Street and street tree improvements, and development of continuous street-level uses. Similarly, adverse impacts were carefully described to provide a balanced and accurate depiction of the impacts. Descriptions of differences in building bulk and arrangement among alternatives aid the reader in visualizing the conditions at or near street level, including solar access and relative openness of the physical setting. Also, please see the response to comment 2 of your testimony in the transcript from December 15th, 2003, regarding potential impacts of bulky buildings on street-level environments.

A review of the Draft EIS text reveals that it does not use “worst-case” terminology (or similar wording) in a biased manner with regard to any alternative. The Draft EIS was carefully worded to maintain objective comparisons among the alternatives, because none of the alternatives was treated as a preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.

4. Thank you for your comments. Please see Chapters 1 and 2 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives.

Letter 9 Historic Seattle

1. Thank you for your comments on historic preservation, and the list of buildings with potentially significant historic value. The Draft EIS analysis did consider non-landmark buildings in the analysis (Please see the response to comment 15 in Letter 5 above). Of the 40 structures identified on the list you provided, 12 are located in the study area and not identified in the Draft EIS (Centennial Building, Chamber of Commerce, Diller Hotel/Porter-Davis, Fifth Avenue Court, Foster and Marshall Building, IBM Building, Maritime Building, Norton Building, Rainier Tower, Second and Pike Building, Securities Building, and the YWCA). The Lyon Building was evidently designated as a landmark structure since the list was compiled.
2. Comment noted. Currently, development in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones can gain the first FAR above the base FAR and 25% of the additional floor area beyond this threshold through landmark TDR. For projects that build to the maximum FAR, this could equate to 35% of the floor area above the base FAR in DOC 1 and 40% of the floor area above the base FAR in DOC 2. Furthermore, the recent TDR amendments enable the City to “bank” development rights from landmark structures, and require projects to purchase landmark TDRs that are available in the bank to gain specified amounts of floor area above the base FAR.

A further protection to designated landmark structures is the existing provision that prohibits projects from altering landmark structures (in ways that exceed base FAR) without Landmark Board approval. Under the Preferred Alternative, raising the maximum FAR limits while retaining the current base FAR limit in DOC 1, DOC 2 and some DMC areas will create the potential for more landmark TDR to be used in future projects. Furthermore, in other DMC areas, landmark TDR remains as an option for increasing floor area above the base FAR while other non-TDR options have been eliminated.

Letter 10 League of Women Voters

1. Thank you for your comments. The Comprehensive Plan has recently been reviewed for 10-year update, and the nearby areas are further included in “Center City” planning work that is considering the functions and interactions of Downtown with its surrounding neighborhoods. Impact review has already occurred or is underway for the cited transportation projects. Rather than make the completion of this EIS contingent upon other extended planning efforts, the preferred course is to complete the EIS review so that the current proposal can be decided upon in a timely manner. The Draft EIS already has provided much evaluation that characterizes the zoning alternatives’ relationship to the current Downtown planning and policy framework. The Preferred Alternative advances those specific recommendations considered in the Draft EIS process that are consistent with growth management objectives and will help to achieve goals and policies for Downtown development that were recently reaffirmed through neighborhood planning.
2. Thank you for your comments on zoning and the TDC program. Chapter 2 of this Final EIS describes the context of other zoning- and bonus-related changes that were made over the last several years. Some of the amendments to the Land Use Code in 2001 that implemented neighborhood plan proposals, including the revised bonus and TDR provisions, were adopted with the anticipation that changes to height and density limits would be considered and resolved through the Draft EIS process.

3. All the alternatives are assumed to accommodate the same projected demand for housing in the study area—forecasted to be roughly 7,500 units. Changes to the height and density limits in the different alternatives by themselves are not expected to affect demand. What will be built over the next 20 years or so will be influenced more by demand for commercial space and housing than by the maximum zoning capacity.

What the zoning changes could alter is the ultimate capacity for future residential development. For example, changes that create more zoned development capacity could theoretically accommodate the demand for housing over a longer period—say over a 40-year period rather than the 20-year timeframe examined in the EIS. In the Draft EIS Land Use section, Table 24 compares how the changes under the various alternatives affect residential capacity, which ranges from a low of 8,490 units in an Alternative 4 scenario to a high of 14,595 units in Alternative 3 where recommended zoning changes and use of TDC are assumed.

Another difference between the alternatives that affects housing is the amount of resources generated for affordable housing programs through the bonus and TDR provisions used by commercial development. Given the various ranges between base FAR and maximum FAR limits on commercial density, the alternatives require use of these programs to different degrees. Over 20 years, it is estimated these funds could be leveraged to produce approximately 2,675 subsidized units in Alternative 1, 3,225 units in Alternative 2, 2,775 units in Alternative 3, and 2,025 units in Alternative 1. These units would not necessarily be built in the study area, but would be located within Downtown.

4. Thank you for suggestions to further investigate mitigation strategies for accommodating low-income and affordable housing. The Final EIS and the Preferred Alternative are intended to initiate a broader look at housing conditions in the larger Center City area. Additional mitigation strategies may include extending options to locate housing funded by Downtown programs in adjacent areas outside Downtown where development costs would be less, allowing for more effective use of dollars generated by the housing bonus program. An additional mitigation measure proposed under the Preferred Alternative is a provision allowing greater heights for residential projects opting to contribute to an affordable housing fund. Currently, residential development is not subject to any provisions addressing impacts on affordability
5. Please see Chapters 1 through 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives addressing residential development.
6. Thank you for your comments on height, bulk and impacts on the pedestrian experience. Along with adverse impacts, the Draft EIS noted several positive impacts on streetscape and pedestrian amenity. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
7. Thank you for your comments supporting smooth transitions in scale and density between different zones. Please see Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion about the Preferred Alternative.
8. Thank you for your comments on parks and open space impacts. Decisionmakers will consider several strategies to mitigate significant adverse impacts on this element of the environment. Following the Final EIS, additional work undertaken in the broader context of the Center City will address strategies for better connections between Downtown and open space resources in adjacent areas.

Letter 11

People for Puget Sound

1. Thank you for your comments on open space impacts.
2. The City's goals for open space in relation to population in the Comprehensive Plan and the Department of Parks and Recreation *Complan* are generally discussed in terms of households. For Urban Centers, including Downtown, the Comprehensive Plan also includes goals for the employment population. Currently, almost 75% of Downtown households are single persons living alone. The average household size in Downtown is 1.34 persons per household. The Draft EIS acknowledges that Downtown currently does not meet open space goals, and will not likely be able to meet them in the future. Certainly, it is unlikely that the amount of open space will double in the next 20 years, given the cost of land and availability of sites. While expanding the supply and quality of public open space resources is a priority, other strategies are also considered, such as:
 - enhancing the public street environment as an urban amenity in Downtown neighborhoods;
 - taking fuller advantage of the perception of openness provided by views out of Downtown; and
 - improving connections to and increasing the use of existing open space resources within Downtown and adjacent areas.
3. Thank you for your comments on stormwater impacts. The SEPA review process predicates the need for impact mitigation on the presence of significant adverse impacts that are attributable to the proposal. This EIS concludes that there would be no such significant adverse impacts on stormwater and therefore no mitigation is necessary. Future development would be required to provide stormwater control facilities meeting regulatory requirements. Those regulations require facilities that have substantive benefits in water quality and quantity control, particularly when compared to uncontrolled runoff from impervious surfaces that are present at many of the future development sites. While features such as green roofs, infiltration and porous pavement would provide benefits, their inclusion is not specifically warranted as stormwater impact mitigation by the findings of this EIS.

Letter 12

1,000 Friends of Washington

1. Thank you for your comments.
2. Thank you for your comments on housing impacts. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS regarding how the Preferred Alternative responds to housing objectives.
3. Thank you for your comments on pedestrian, bulk and scale impacts. Decisionmakers will consider a range of strategies to address potential adverse impacts.
4. Thank you for your comments on traffic impacts and the need for transportation mitigation. Refer to Chapter 4 in this Final EIS for additional mitigation strategies that clarify transit-oriented mitigation funding methods and the role of housing in aiding transportation mitigation.
5. Thank you for your comments supporting reductions in minimum and maximum parking requirements as a mitigation strategy.

6. Thank you for your comments on open space impacts and suggested mitigation strategies. Decisionmakers will consider several strategies to address potential adverse impacts. Current requirements for residential and office developments to provide open space or common recreation area for the use of project occupants, and incentives to provide public open space features similar to those you identify would be retained in all alternatives.

Letter 13
Michael Baker

1. Thank you for your comments. It is agreed that context is important to the discussion of the alternative height and density arrangements that are possible within Downtown Seattle. Perhaps most importantly, this includes the physical, political, legal, historical and regional contexts affecting Downtown. Comparisons to other cities' experiences could be helpful as well. Effective visualization of the relative amounts of change is also of interest. Please see Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
2. Thank you for your comments. Inevitably, in publicly discussing complex zoning and policy issues, a level of precision is lost while an opportunity for the public to voice their opinions, interests and concerns is gained. Often, the opportunity to discuss precise quantitative data is limited in public meetings. Additional public meetings will occur as DPD moves forward with "Center City" planning efforts. Please review the Draft and Final EIS for additional information that illustrates the alternatives and their implications in quantitative and qualitative terms.
3. Your comments touch on some of the pertinent interests to be considered by decisionmakers, summarized as: what are the purposes and projected outcomes of regulatory changes, and how would those fit in with growth management policies and the public interest? The Draft EIS should be considered in the context of the larger planning effort that it serves. Primarily, the EIS is a tool for evaluating proposals that were developed as part of an extensive neighborhood planning process. While summarized in the document, much of the rationale upon which the recommendations are based is discussed more fully in the plans themselves.
4. The Draft EIS extensively analyzed components of the "built environment" that are the most important aspects of the environment in highly-developed Downtown. The elements related to the natural environment—Water, Earth, Air Quality, Plants and Animals among others—were considered for review during "scoping" of the document, but eliminated due to lack of probable significant adverse impacts in the Downtown study area. Given the complexity of the subject matter, it may be difficult for the reader to interpret the relative level of impacts, but in general that is determined by comparing the impacts of the alternatives to Alternative 4, which is a "No Action" alternative (e.g., what would happen if the existing zoning continued over the next 20 years). See Chapter 4 of this Final EIS for an impact summary table comparing the alternatives.
5. Thank you for your comments on urban character issues. This EIS is one aspect of the City's ongoing planning efforts that seek to make the best policy and regulatory choices to guide Seattle's growth. Please see Chapters 1 through 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives.

Letter 14
Marshall N. Brown

1. Thank you for your comments. Please note that the study area does not include South Lake Union or lower Queen Anne, and includes only the portion of the Denny Regrade (Belltown) that is nearest the Downtown Commercial Core.

Letter 15
Jonathan Dubman

1. Thank you for your comments. You touch on several of the interrelated topics relevant to possible zoning changes—including the function of height limits and transitions, building bulk, views, Downtown housing, growth management, transportation and historic preservation.

Letter 16
Robert F. Hintz

1. The Draft EIS included analysis in Chapter 3 and Appendix H of the relationship to Comprehensive Plan policies. The analysis does not identify any Comprehensive Plan goals or policies that need to be modified in order for the zone change alternatives to occur. This suggests that even with such changes, the Downtown zoning system would remain consistent with the current goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Letter 17
Douglas Howe

1. In the Draft EIS, Alternative 1 assumed an increase in the base FAR for the DOC2-300 zone from 5 to 6, but not an increase from 5 to 7 in the DMC zone. Chapter 1 of the Final EIS includes discussion that clarifies the rationale for the changes proposed in the Preferred Alternative.
2. Thank you for your comments on Alternative 2. Your summary mischaracterizes the text at page 2-15. In reference to the DMC zones peripheral to the office core, Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS notes, “...where it is desirable to balance residential and employment growth and maintain a gradual transition between the concentrated development intensity in the office core zones and surrounding neighborhoods...” It does not indicate that commercial development should be discouraged in favor of residential development. The Draft EIS Chapter 2 characterization of the Downtown Mixed Commercial zone reflects an interpretation that the “Mixed Commercial” zone should accommodate a mixture of residential and commercial uses and should provide transition to less dense surrounding areas.
3. Thank you for your comments on Alternative 3. Please see Chapters 1 and 2 of this Final EIS for further discussion of alternatives.
4. Thank you for your comments on the Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program. Notwithstanding value judgments about the worth of the TDC program, the alternatives’ varying effects on the operability of the TDC program represent an adverse impact on a current land use regulatory program. Please see the text of Letter 3 from the King County Water and Land Resources Division.

5. Thank you for your comments on urban design and height/bulk/scale. It is agreed that good building design is an essential need. Flexibility for better tower design is part of the rationale for increasing height limits. This would address the criticism that recent projects' bulk were caused by too-constraining height limits in the Land Use Code. Even though these projects were subject to Design Review, the constrained height limits still encouraged bulkier floor plates to achieve the maximum permitted density. The Draft EIS found that with the proportions of added height and density in some of the alternatives, the same issue of bulky appearance would not be resolved. The Preferred Alternative provides a new choice that will provide more flexibility in height to achieve better building forms that will have more aesthetically pleasing distribution of bulk.

Letter 18
William Justen

1. Thank you for your comments on Alternative 1 and the need for increased density Downtown. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
2. Thank you for your comments on Downtown residential growth as a form of traffic mitigation. As discussed in response to comments of the Seattle Planning Commission, U.S. Census data from 2000 indicate relatively low automobile ownership by Downtown residents and a considerably higher rate of walking to/from work than residents in other areas of the city. The EIS analyses reflect an understanding of that phenomenon. Refer to Chapter 4 of this Final EIS for an additional mitigation strategy that clarifies the role of residential growth in aiding transportation mitigation.
3. The analysis in the Draft EIS does not dispute the beneficial effects of Downtown housing with regard to transportation. However, the magnitude of this impact needs to be considered in light of the overall composition of Downtown's household and employment population. In 2000, there were 11,361 households compared to 174,528 jobs Downtown, and increases in employment continue to outpace housing growth. The more relevant issue may be the relationship between actions that increase future employment growth Downtown (such as proposals for increasing commercial density limits) and efforts to increase the supply of housing. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for a discussion of the Preferred Alternative's approach to actions that would promote both residential and employment growth, to maximize the benefits of a mixed-use development pattern, including the transportation benefits cited in your letter.

The off-street parking analysis does not exaggerate future parking demand, because it appropriately calculates residential and employment-related parking demands. The residential parking demand was based on 1990 U.S. Census-based automobile ownership rates that are relatively consistent with 2000 U.S. Census data. The employment-related parking demand accurately embodied regional mode share projections that account for the entire spectrum of transportation choices made by all areas throughout the region, including Downtown. In other words, it takes into account the travel behavior of Downtown residents and employees.

4. Proposals for increasing commercial density limits were based on an assumption that additional development capacity would be needed to accommodate potential job growth Downtown. For analysis purposes, the Draft EIS assumed a relatively ambitious rate of growth to provide a sufficient assessment of the potential impacts that could occur over 20 years under different growth scenarios. The Draft EIS did conclude that the zoning under all alternatives, including existing conditions, could accommodate even an ambitious rate of growth that might occur over 20 years.

As is demonstrated in the Draft EIS analysis, increasing height and density limits does not necessarily ensure the maximum generation of revenue for housing through the bonus programs. If growth levels are significantly below those anticipated and demand for office space is low, it is possible that projects would not be built to the permitted maximum FAR limit, which under some scenarios allows projects over 1,000,000 square feet on full-block sites. Under such circumstances, and coupled with proposals for increases to the base FAR limit, the use of housing bonuses may actually be less.

5. Your comments endorsing Downtown high-rise housing development as an amenity that could help attract additional office development are noted. Regarding the desirability of encouraging high-density high-rise residential towers, the Preferred Alternative in this Final EIS focuses on identifying the conditions that will optimally attract residential development, including locations and the relative intensity of commercial development allowed in the area. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for more information.
6. If so little office development is anticipated in the future, such significant increases in commercial development densities throughout the study area would seem unwarranted. Such a scenario raises the concern that residential development would be less likely to occur in areas where property owners might be more inclined to hold onto property in anticipation of accommodating high-density commercial development at some point in the distant future. The Preferred Alternative seeks to provide a balance by increasing opportunities for the highest-density commercial development in the areas that are clearly best suited to that use, and accommodating residential development in other areas while not precluding employment growth in those areas.
7. Depending on the location, height limit increases of 50% may actually be less than those proposed in some alternatives. For example, in Alternative 1, heights are proposed to be increased by 100 feet throughout the Denny Triangle, which is more than a 50% increase in areas where current limits are 125 feet and 160 feet. If the intent for the increases is to encourage taller and more slender residential towers, height limits above 600 feet may be unnecessary. As a comparison, in Vancouver, B.C., a city often cited for successfully achieving this building type, the maximum height limits generally range between 320 to 450 feet.
8. Thank you for your comments on the “planned community development” (PCD) process. The minimum site size of a PCD is currently 55,000 square feet in DOC 1 and 100,000 square feet in other Downtown areas where it is permitted. The purpose of establishing the PCD process was to allow added flexibility for major development on large sites or areas of Downtown to accommodate projects providing major public benefits, such as significant public open space, and to coordinate development over a larger area to enhance benefits beyond what might otherwise be achieved. These benefits might include a wider range of uses in the area, accommodating a needed public facility, providing for a better massing of development to achieve specific urban form objectives, preserving landmark structures, etc. At a little over one-third the area of a typical square block, a site of 20,000-25,000 square feet would likely be insufficient in size to accommodate the type of tradeoff between flexibility and public benefit intended. As an alternative that would better address flexibility for certain situations, changes to combined lot provisions could be considered.
9. Thank you for your comments on preferring to let the market determine the balance between employment and residential growth. If the public is to consider making substantial public investment in residential infrastructure in some Downtown areas, it may be desirable to have the assurance provided by certain land use regulations that enough housing to warrant the investment will actually occur in the area.
10. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 19
Alan Kurimura

1. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 20
Jack McCullough, letter #1

1. Thank you for your comments. Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS and portions of Chapter 3 characterized the relationship of the alternatives to the applicable neighborhood plans. The maximum height and density increases specified in these neighborhood plans were incorporated into Alternative 1. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS regarding the Preferred Alternative.
2. Thank you for your comments on upper level setbacks and the need for design flexibility. Increases to the height limits are proposed, in part, to provide more flexibility for the massing of structures. The Preferred Alternative also proposes maximum floor sizes for high-rise residential structures and limits on façade widths as a simpler approach for addressing the bulk of development.
3. Downtown Seattle, already the largest employment center in the region, makes sense as a primary focus of the cited transit systems. It is not clear that funding for such systems will have been ill-spent if no zoning changes occur. Downtown's growth targets reflect the presence of these transit improvements. Providing additional capacity for growth in Downtown could aid in reinforcing the value of such transit systems.
4. Thank you for your comments. Please refer to neighborhood plan-related discussion in Chapter 2 of this Final EIS.
5. Thank you for your comment on the impacts of Alternative 3 and buffers. This comment mischaracterizes the findings of the EIS with respect to jobs. The Draft EIS at page 3-11 indicated that if all redevelopable sites in the Urban Center were built out over the next 40 to 50 years, Alternative 1 would accommodate approximately 33,000 more employees than Alternative 3. This translates to approximately 48 years of future employment growth capacity under Alternative 1 compared to approximately 38 years of employment growth capacity under Alternative 3. This illustrates the range of potential long-term differences in zoned capacity under the studied alternatives. Please see the response to comment #21 in this letter regarding transitions (or "buffers") in DMC zones.

It should be pointed out that the Downtown neighborhood plans also emphasize accommodating substantial increases in the Downtown housing supply, with a goal for adding over 15,000 units by 2014. This goal far exceeds the number of housing units likely to be funded through the commercial incentive programs, estimated to be between 2,025 and 3,225 units depending upon the alternative. Meeting this goal will require substantially more opportunities for accommodating housing development than can be produced through incentives for commercial development.

6. Thank you for your comments on the topic of "mandatory mixed-use" buildings under Alternative 3. The provision proposed in Alternative 3 makes mixed-use "mandatory" only in the sense that projects opting to develop above the base FAR would be required to include residential use on the site. Commercial development in the DMR/C zone under Alternative 3 would be permitted to build up to the base FAR of 5 without housing.

7. Thank you for your comments on the cost of slender residential buildings. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS regarding recommended provisions to encourage slender buildings. Also, please see the response to comment 3 in Letter 8 (Downtown Seattle Association) regarding the pedestrian environment. Decisionmakers will need to provide a balance, weighing actions that could potentially increase building cost against measures to ensure the quality and livability of the urban environment.
8. Your comments on market-related perspectives about growth, development costs, and the need for incentivizing strategies rather than restrictive mitigation strategies are noted. Estimates of potential diversion of growth to other neighborhoods or jurisdictions are speculative and difficult to evaluate meaningfully (see the response to comment 9 below, and the responses to comments 7-9 in Letter 5 from the Seattle Planning Commission).
9. Your perspectives about growth, comparative costs of development and related project decisionmaking cited in this comment are noted. However, as reinforced by the findings of a real estate consultant study, the Draft EIS notes that *“the number of employees Downtown will instead be driven by economic forces larger than the Downtown real estate market. Factors such as the regional and international growth industries most likely to seek Downtown office space, interest rates, the availability of funding for new development projects, and the regional transportation network are more likely to influence the amount of new Downtown office development than zoning changes.”* The economic cycles in this region and their evident effect on “boom-bust” development cycles demonstrate these influences on development trends.

At the level of 20-year growth projections for a large area, it is reasonable to assume a certain level of residential and employment growth and study its effects among four alternatives. This is particularly helpful in order to gauge the comparative impacts among the alternatives for several elements of the environment. Estimations of potential differences in total amounts of growth over 20 years based on shades of differences in zone regulations would be rather speculative, and might obscure comparisons of impacts among the alternatives. Considering that Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 consist primarily of increases in allowable height and density (in Alternative 3 only for the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones), these alternatives should increase the attractiveness of Downtown for development rather than decrease it. (Also see the response to comment 20 in this letter.)

It should also be noted that the objectives of the proposals evaluated in the Draft EIS are not solely focused on promoting employment growth Downtown. They also emphasize creating conditions conducive to housing development. The various alternatives explore different approaches for balancing how both job and housing growth can be accommodated.

10. Thank you for your comments on the TDC program. Notwithstanding value judgments about the worth of the TDC program, the alternatives’ varying effects on the operability of the TDC program represent an adverse impact on a current land use regulatory program. Refer to Letter 3 from the King County Water and Land Resources Division. The program has already resulted in the expenditure and commitment of funds by King County for public amenities in the Denny Triangle, as well as an interlocal agreement committing the County to include significant public open space as part of the redevelopment of a major property holding, Convention Place Station, in the area.
11. The EIS does not base its assessment of housing impacts in Chapter 3 on the premise of a 1-for-1 jobs-housing balance. The cited discussion is located on pages 1-7 and 1-8 of the Draft EIS under the heading of “Major Issues to be Resolved.” The discussion poses policy questions rather than certainties on the topic of priorities for employment and residential growth. The discussion does not promote a 1-for-1 job/housing balance. Rather, it poses two possible policy choices: one that would

“expand Downtown’s role as employment center,” and the other that would “promote a balance between both employment and housing growth.” Under this latter point, the discussion notes the presence of housing as well as employment growth targets for Downtown, and the possible need to ensure sufficient housing capacity. In reality, these are not “either/or” propositions, and “balance” should be interpreted as only a relative term.

12. The EIS does not assume a premise that “Downtown workers should live Downtown.” With regard to low-income housing, this comment mischaracterizes findings on page 3-23 of the Draft EIS. The text identifies that under Alternative 2 a greater proportion of employee households (of all incomes) could theoretically find housing Downtown if all development capacity was used, and that this reflects “*a decrease in the number of potential Downtown workers and an increase in the number of potential housing units.*” Therefore, the Draft EIS already provides the clarification this comment requests. On the same page (3-23) of the Draft EIS, it is noted that under Alternative 2, “*more resources could be available to meet demand for housing for the lowest-income households than under Alternative 1. New office and hotel projects contributing to the Downtown Bonus program would provide funds that could leverage other public and private funds to create housing to serve these populations.*”
13. This comment mischaracterizes the nature of the analysis on page 3-18 and 3-20 of the Draft EIS. The reference on page 3-18 compares the number of households generated by Downtown commercial employment at maximum commercial buildout to the maximum number of housing units at maximum residential buildout in Downtown. This illustrates that future Downtown commercial growth is likely to generate much more demand for housing than able to be satisfied within Downtown under any of the alternatives.

This comment narrowly defines Downtown as only an employment center, whereas City policy also defines a residential housing role for Downtown (refer to Draft EIS Tables 8 and 9, pages 3-6 and 3-7). The fact is that a certain proportion of households that work Downtown will prefer to live Downtown, and some proportion of those households might not be able to locate suitably priced housing in Downtown, now and in the future. The fact of demand for housing Downtown (as witnessed in Belltown and other neighborhoods) does not reflect an assumption that “employees in an urban center should live in that urban center.” Creating opportunities for Downtown workers to live Downtown is regarded as a positive aspect that, ultimately, could help alleviate transportation impacts related to work commute trips.

14. This comment assumes that mixed-use projects are limited to projects that include both residential and commercial uses in the same structure. Several built or proposed mixed-use developments in Seattle include housing and commercial uses in separate structures. The consultant’s analysis concluded that over time, developers would seek to maximize return on properties by full utilization of the development potential for both commercial and residential use on a site. This conclusion is applicable to all of the studied alternatives, not just Alternative 3. Refer to Draft EIS Appendix G for modeled project data.
15. For all alternatives, the assumption was that development would be built to the maximum density limits, and the amount of funding generated for affordable housing was based on what proportion of the floor area above the base FAR would be gained through the housing bonus program. The consultant indicated this was a reasonable outcome under all scenarios. The fact that a major office project currently under construction is being built to the existing maximum FAR without the benefit of height and density increases and fully participating in the housing bonus program lends support to the validity of this assumption. The cited differences in base FAR definition among the alternatives were intentional, as part of the analytic process.

The approach employed in the Draft EIS analysis does include comparisons that are based on a consistent set of assumptions. If it were necessary to suggest that Alternative 3 “overstates” housing production because the need to use more bonus area makes a project more costly (another assumption), it would be equally important to suggest that Alternative 1 overstates the situation. This is because it assumes all projects will build to the proposed higher maximum FARs, which one could argue may not be the case if the cost of the bonus was considered unreasonable relative to the expected return for the project.

16. The housing mitigation strategies (page 3-28 of the Draft EIS) address measures to increase funding for affordable subsidized housing through the bonus program for commercial development, as well as measures for enhancing conditions for market-rate housing production.
 - For affordable subsidized housing through the bonus program, no proposals would require a reduction in proposed development densities. The additional use of bonuses would be achieved by maximizing the use of housing bonuses for gaining additional floor area above the base FAR, which could include maintaining the base FARs at current levels while allowing increases in the maximum FARs.
 - To increase opportunities for market-rate residential development, one strategy identified is to rezone areas for primarily residential use, which would result in reduced commercial densities. There are no instances where commercial development densities are recommended to be reduced below current levels and use of the housing bonus increased.
17. Thank you for your comment on exploring family-oriented amenities and schools as an incentive.
18. Your perspectives about growth, comparative costs of development and related decision-making are noted. This comment overstates the assumptions made for the analysis. It may also overstate the portability of commercial demand and development choices within the region. Certain affinities to Downtown locations exist for certain business sectors (for example, law offices attracted by proximity to courts). Also, this comment discounts the increases built into the action alternatives. Given that Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 consist primarily of increases in permissible height and density (in Alternatives 2 and 3 only for the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones), they should conceptually increase the attractiveness of Downtown for development rather than decrease it. Please see the responses to comments 8, 9 and 20 in this letter for additional discussion, and refer to Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for description of the Preferred Alternative.
19. Your comments on bonus costs affecting maximization of density are noted. However, it appears they conflict with neighborhood plans' rationales for increasing density. Increasing the supply of subsidized housing was one of the primary justifications for height and density increases. Not utilizing the full density would reduce the financial resources generated for affordable housing, resulting in fewer subsidized units.
20. This comment assumes that some of the alternatives to significantly increase height and density Downtown would generate “dislocation” of Downtown development to other Seattle neighborhoods or cities in the region. Given other commentary in this letter, this is likely directed at Alternatives 2 and 3, in which fewer areas of Downtown would be increased in height and density than in Alternative 1. An underlying assumption of this comment is that anything less than the maximum zoning change will generate impacts. However, the normal orientation of SEPA review is to evaluate impacts by comparing to the No Action Alternative, which is Alternative 4. Using this approach, all of the other alternatives would represent significant increases in permissible height and density, which should increase the attractiveness of Downtown for development rather than decrease it.

Therefore, potential “dislocation” of development to other areas based on differences in zoning is not a supported finding, nor is it an impact of the alternatives.

Further, the regional growth strategy promoted through GMA calls for the creation of other employment centers and continued investments to improve transit access to these areas. As the region continues to grow and the job base increases, it is unreasonable to assume that Downtown will continue to maintain the same percentage of regional employment growth as it has in the past. The efforts of the GMA are to ensure that most growth occurs in the already urbanized area of the region, within designated centers like Downtown where it can be best accommodated.

21. The Downtown Urban Center Plan was adopted in 1999 and the goals and policies for the Downtown Urban Center are now included in the Neighborhood Planning Element of the Comprehensive Plan. These goal and policies were largely drawn from the Downtown Land Use and Transportation Plan, originally adopted in 1985, which was reviewed and reaffirmed through the neighborhood planning process. The concept of providing for transitions in Downtown areas appears in several policies in the Comprehensive Plan, including those related to establishing height and density limits, and the intent of specific zones.

In particular, the Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zone is described as suitable for areas *“that provide a transition in the level of activity and scale of development.”* (DT-LUP4). DT-UDP4 states that height limits are regulated to *“provide transition to the edges of Downtown to complement the physical form, features and landmarks of the areas adjacent to Downtown.”* In DT-UDP5, transition is specifically identified as a criterion for determining appropriate height limits, with the direction to *“generally taper height limits from an apex in the office core toward the perimeter of Downtown, to provide transitions to the waterfront and neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.”* While what constitutes an appropriate transition is debatable, providing a transition between high-density Downtown areas and less-intensive adjacent neighborhoods is still a legitimate matter. The Draft EIS Figure 19 entitled “sensitive transition areas” identifies how the current zoning and height limits have been defined to accommodate transition between the study area and adjacent neighborhoods.

22. The City’s SEPA Ordinance discusses Height, Bulk and Scale impacts at SMC 25.05.675G. The policy background text indicates *“The purpose of the City’s adopted land use regulations is to provide for smooth transition between industrial, commercial, and residential areas, to preserve the character of individual city neighborhoods and to reinforce natural topography by controlling the height, bulk and scale of development.”* Further, *“However, the City’s land use regulations cannot anticipate or address all substantial adverse impacts resulting from incongruous height, bulk and scale...Similarly, the mapping of the City’s zoning designations cannot always provide a reasonable transition in height, bulk and scale between development in adjacent zones.”* These observations and policies supporting compatibility of height, bulk and scale provide a foundation for discussing impacts in the Draft EIS. Your comment on the Design Review process and impact mitigation is noted. However, Design Review only applies to the existing zoning context. It does not address situations where changes to height and density are being considered that would introduce a different scale of development within an area.
23. Nine alley vacations have been approved in Downtown over the last 10 years, including the IDX Tower site, 700 Olive, Stewart Place and Grand Hyatt/Washington State Convention Center expansion. Given that bulk is controlled through a floor area ratio in Downtown, and the total amount of floor area allowed is determined by site size, vacating alleys to create large full-block sites does allow a much larger scale of development to be introduced into an area than would otherwise occur if public rights-of-way were maintained in public use. One of the arguments for increasing building

height limits has been to allow more design flexibility to correct the bulky appearance of recent projects like the IDX Tower and 700 Olive, both of which were granted alley vacations.

The alley vacation review process allows a range of impacts and public benefits to be considered, and a final decision to achieve a high priority public benefit, such as the preservation of a landmark structure, may allow for a tradeoff permitting a bulkier-appearing building. While there are potential positive benefits that can be achieved through the approval process for alley vacations, there may be limits to how extensively issues of building bulk can be addressed if the height limits and density limits are established based on a development pattern set by the existing platting of private parcels and public rights-of-way. There may also be limits if the relationship between the height limits and the density limits is such that design flexibility is severely constrained for a maximized development (in terms of floor area) on a large site created by the alley vacation.

24. Your comments on the need for incentives to promote the development of slender residential buildings are noted. As noted with other descriptions of bulk characteristics, “slender” is a relative term. The zoning for much of Belltown includes development standards to limit the bulk of residential towers, making them more slender than some high-rises built in other Downtown zones that are not subject to these standards. These regulations limiting tower size have not prevented these buildings from being built within the current height limits of 240 feet. What constitutes “slender” towers will need to be defined, as well as how best to achieve them in a manner that makes development economically feasible. See Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
25. Your comments on the difficulties of requiring limited floorplates for slender office buildings and the potential effect on development decisions are noted.
26. Your opposition to extending DMR development standards to other Downtown areas as mitigation is noted.
27. Your comments on the mitigation strategy of converting residential floor area to chargeable FAR are noted. Legitimate concerns about the potential bulk of residential buildings have been raised by City staff and the public, because these structures are not subject to the same controls as other permitted uses. The condition could potentially be exacerbated in situations where development sites “max out” permitted commercial densities, then add residential use to increase overall project floor area and bulk. If the maximum density limits expressed in the commercial FAR and height limits imply a certain predictability regarding the potential scale of Downtown development in a particular area, future projects that substantially exceed these limits due to floor area exemptions may result in unanticipated impacts. Downtown plans and policies seek to promote residential development, but not at all costs; there are also policies addressing desirable conditions to promote livability and a high-quality physical environment that need to be taken into consideration.
28. Your comments on the mitigation strategy of overlays for transition areas are noted. Please see the response to comment 21 above regarding the background and policy basis for “sensitive transition areas.”
29. Under existing provisions, (SMC 23.49.011A2a), street-level retail sales and service or entertainment uses continue to be bonusable features in certain mapped locations allowing floor area increases for the first FAR above the base FAR in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones. In DMC zones, the option to bonus this space is still available at mapped locations. Elsewhere, the fact that the space occupied by certain street level uses, including retail, is exempt from floor area calculations is in effect a bonus that is not available to development in zones outside of Downtown. When the retail bonus was

initially established, it was at a time when providing street level uses was regarded as a financial risk for a project. As Downtown continues to evolve as a dense, pedestrian-oriented environment, providing such uses will become less risky and may no longer warrant a public bonus, especially in light of the desire to support higher-priority public benefits. It should also be noted that residential projects within Downtown, and all developments in Pioneer Square and the International District, provide street-level uses without the benefit of a bonus.

30. The Downtown Code states in Section 23.49.011.A1f. *“Except as otherwise provided in this subsection A2f, not less than five (5) percent of all floor area above the base FAR to be gained on any lot, excluding any floor area gained under subsection A2a or A2c of this Section, shall be gained through the transfer of Landmark TDR, to the extent Landmark TDR is available. Landmark TDR shall be considered ‘available’ only to the extent that, at the time of the Master Use Permit, application to gain the additional floor area, the City of Seattle is offering Landmark TDR for sale, at a price per square foot no greater than the total bonus contribution under Section 23.49.012 for a project using the cash option for both housing and child care facilities.”* Currently, the City has not acquired any Landmark TDR that would be subject to the provision cited above.
31. As described in the responses to comments 5 and 20 of this letter, the suggested job “dislocation” or dispersal impacts are not identified impacts of any Alternative. Further, the suggestion that 30,000 jobs would need to be accommodated in Seattle neighborhoods or other cities as a result of selecting a particular alternative is based on an erroneous interpretation of the findings.
32. Thank you for your comments on eliminating minimum parking requirements but not parking ceilings. To promote greater transit use, the Preferred Alternative proposes elimination of the commercial parking requirement, while maintaining the maximum limits on the amount of parking that can be provided.
33. The parking analysis indicates that future development would likely provide considerably more parking than the amount lost from existing parking facilities, including short-term parking, assuming existing types of parking requirements continue, or developers would choose to provide parking at amounts currently required to meet tenant demand. The alternatives do not include restrictions that would hinder market-driven provision of parking supply.
34. The suggested analyses of project costs brought about by a potential LEED requirement (a sustainable design approach) and its relationship to regional competitiveness in attracting new development are beyond the scope of this EIS. Any potential cost analysis would need to carefully specify what timeframe and context would be assumed. Sustainable design advocates generally conclude that the LEED approach results in net benefits with regard to long-term cost performance of buildings, including with regard to their occupants.

Letter 21
Jack McCullough, letter #2

1. Thank you for submitting the extensive list of potential code changes intended as a menu of options, as well as their supporting goals and assumptions.
2. Your recommendations for enhancing the Design Review process via design departures are noted.
3. Your recommendation for eliminating or simplifying upper level setbacks and coverage limitations is noted. See Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.

4. Your recommendation for modifying “access-to-parking” standards is noted. Current provisions seek to direct loading activities off alleys and locate vehicular access to on-site parking to locations with the least impact on pedestrian circulation.
5. Your recommendations for providing transitions in scale are noted. One concern about provisions that address an issue like transition is that they provide a high degree of predictability. Provisions that introduce flexibility that may result in unintended consequences could be counterproductive.
6. Your recommendation for allowing more transfer and “stacking” of floor area is noted. Concerns about the relationship between the maximum densities allowed and the height needed to accommodate permitted floor area are important to address. Height limits even as high as 700 feet may not be adequate to accommodate development that can be as dense as 20 FAR, and allowed to become denser through the additional stacking of floor area from nearby sites.
7. Your recommendations for greater flexibility to achieve slender residential towers are noted. With proposed height limits as high as 700 feet, there may not be a strong incentive to develop a slender tower in order to go even higher. In Vancouver, B.C., a city often cited for successfully achieving taller, slender residential towers, the typical height for such towers is 320 feet, with 450 feet allowed in some areas. See Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
8. Your recommendation for easing Energy Code requirements is noted. However, the Washington State Energy Code requirements for residential buildings are established by the RCW as both a maximum and a minimum. The City of Seattle does not have the authority to make modifications to these requirements (DPD, 2004).
9. Your recommendations for providing more residential- and family-oriented amenity bonuses are noted. Currently, the bonuses are limited for use by commercial developments. The bonus provides an incentive of added floor area for projects incorporating features or participating in programs that are intended to mitigate the impacts resulting from increased employment densities. While there may be a logical extension to include features that benefit Downtown residents, since some percentage of them are likely work in these new developments, it may be more direct and defensible to look to residential development to contribute, either through incentives or requirements, to features used by the residential population. See Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
10. Your recommendation for easing other construction code requirements is noted.
11. Your recommendations for open space bonusing are noted. Current provisions allow bonuses for open space provided off-site, and also allow the open space requirement for an office project to be met by providing public open space at an off-site location. The TDC program in the Denny Triangle allows contributions to an amenity fund to generate resources for open space acquisition. Provisions for open space TDR also allow floor area increases for projects that purchase development rights from sites that are to be improved as public open space. Difficulties potentially hindering use of these incentives include lack of available sites and the need to coordinate with multiple development projects to gain sufficient resources for open space acquisition and improvements. For any single project, the expense is likely too great relative to the bonus gained.
12. Your recommendation for restoring and enhancing the retail bonus is noted. Please see the response to comment 29 in Letter 20 above.

13. Your recommendation for providing a “free” additional 2 FAR for additions to existing development is noted. However, many of these projects, including the one cited, were built under earlier Codes, when the base FAR was as high as 10, so have benefited from relatively more “free” FAR than projects built more recently. Also, with certain uses exempt from FAR calculations, like housing and street-level retail, there are opportunities to accommodate additional development without the need to use bonuses.
14. Your recommendation to eliminate SEPA transportation mitigation authority in Downtown is noted. The planned public transit system improvements, transportation management plans (TMPs) and parking limitations will provide significant assistance in addressing Downtown congestion impacts. However, it is not necessary or advisable for the City to eliminate mitigation authority, as elimination of authority would not in itself improve any impact condition. This approach would negate the potential for SEPA authority to be used in a coordinated, positive fashion to achieve targeted physical improvements to Downtown's street network. See Chapter 4 of this Final EIS for the summary of transportation mitigation strategies put forward for consideration by decisionmakers.
15. Your recommendation to consider additional increases in density (20 FAR in DOC1, 16 FAR in DOC 2 and 13 FAR in DMC) is noted. The Draft EIS alternatives included the specific increases that were proposed in the various Downtown neighborhood plans. See Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
16. Your recommendation for linking density increases to proximity to rail transit is noted. However, the suggested proximity of four blocks from rail transit would encompass most of the Downtown area. It has been the intent of Downtown zoning to reflect the accessibility to transit in establishing the maximum allowable densities in an area.
17. Your recommendation for eliminating minimum parking requirements is noted.
18. Your recommendation for restoring the short-term parking bonus is noted. Short-term parking remains a bonusable item under current regulations. Providing short-term parking within a mapped area abutting the retail core can be used to increase floor area in a project for the first FAR above the base FAR (see SMC 23.49.011A2a). However, the bonus for short-term parking is based on providing additional parking in excess of the amount otherwise required, and the elimination of the minimum parking requirement in the Preferred Alternative makes it more difficult to distinguish the public benefit provided by this incentive if it is used only to satisfy the demand for short-term parking generated by the project itself.
19. Your recommendation for increasing the allowable maximum distance for off-site parking in Downtown is noted.
20. Your recommendation for allowing housing TDRs to be generated from sites outside Downtown is noted. Downtown neighborhood plans have emphasized a desire to focus the benefits of Downtown development incentive programs on Downtown neighborhoods. In addressing issues like this, consideration also needs to be given to the zoning where housing resources outside of Downtown are located. Since the transfer involves unused commercial development potential, many structures outside of Downtown are located in zones with little or no allowances for commercial use. Further, cheaper land values outside of Downtown may make available TDRs from these locations more attractive than more costly TDRs in from housing structures in Downtown neighborhoods, where housing resources are more likely to be threatened by greater pressures for commercial development. In any case, proposals that potentially contribute to an oversupply of available TDRs can also weaken the program.

21. Your recommendation to allow the housing bonus value to float is noted. To some degree, it is unlikely that development will occur until demand has reached the point that rents rise to the levels that were used to initially establish the value.
22. Your recommendations regarding the Planned Community Development tool are noted. Please see the response to comment 8 in Letter 20 above. Because of the significant variations in development densities that can occur on portions of a PCD area, and the need to establish a clear public benefit to sanction the extra flexibility, it is not likely that this would be approved at the administrative level.
23. Your recommendations for increasing the flexibility for using TDRs are noted. See Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
24. Regarding two half-blocks between Pine and Union, these blocks, located in the retail core (DRC) zone, were not included in the Draft EIS study area, but now have been included in the Final EIS study area (refer to analysis in Chapter 4).

Letter 22
Steve Mooney

1. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 23
Tony Puma

1. Thank you for your comments. Please see Chapter 1 for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
2. Thank you for the suggested strategy regarding slender towers and rooftop open space.

Letter 24
Greg Smith

1. Thank you for your comments on possible height bonuses and other provisions for residential buildings. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative, which addresses these topics in various ways. Please note that within the study area, residential towers with floor sizes of 15,000 square feet or less are not currently subject to upper-level development standards. Also, proposals that increase the supply of TDRs may contribute to an oversupply and diminish the effectiveness of the program to address the most critical priorities for its use, including the protection of existing affordable housing structures, landmark buildings and the provision of new public open space resources.
2. See response to comment 24 in Letter 21 above.
3. Thank you for your comments recommending broader Center City planning. Other city planning efforts are underway to evaluate possible changes in the southern portion of Downtown, including Pioneer Square, Chinatown/I.D. and adjacent areas. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative.

Letter 25
John Smith

1. Thank you for your comments.

Letter 26
Scott Species

1. The Draft EIS predominantly consists of cumulative impact analysis, wherein the overall effects of growth over 20 years are compared under different zoning scenarios, including the No Action Alternative. This approach helps identify the overall net impacts of different zoning compared to retaining the existing zoning. The example in this comment pertains more closely to construction-level impacts that are too speculative to identify at this level of SEPA review.
2. The prospect of studying Air Quality was reviewed during scoping for this EIS. However, this element of the environment was not included in the EIS Scope due to a lack of probable significant adverse impacts. This conclusion was reached based in part upon data from the Puget Sound Regional Council and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency websites. These sources include the PSRC's "*Destination 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Puget Sound Region*" and the Clean Air Agency's 1998 *Annual Data Summary* and February 2001 monthly air quality summary report. The projections in these data indicate that carbon monoxide and three other modeled pollutants (VOC, NOx and particulates) are expected to dramatically decrease at least through the 2020 timeframe, despite predicted increases in traffic and congestion.
3. The prospect of studying noise, toxic/hazardous materials and risk exposure was reviewed during scoping for this EIS. However, these elements of the environment were not included in the EIS Scope due to a lack of probable significant adverse impacts attributable to the alternatives.
4. Your suggestion for a light and glare study of City street lighting is noted. However, there is a lack of probable significant adverse impacts attributable to the alternatives.
5. Thank you for your comments. The Comprehensive Plan does set goals for open space in different types of urban environments to help determine where additional facilities are desirable, but it does not establish specific requirements. The zoning requirements for open space in the Land Use Code are at a finer level of detail than Comprehensive Plan goals and policies on public open space.
6. This EIS is the means of identifying and mitigating potential significant adverse impacts on the environment. No issues are identified as "deferred." To the extent that the public and agencies identify substantive topics of interest, they are addressed in this Final EIS. The SEPA environmental review process does not contemplate the sort of extended studies suggested in this comment. The relative performance of Downtown zoning will be evaluated over the long-term by the City.
7. Thank you for your comments.
8. Thank you for your comments on transition in height, bulk and scale.

Letter 27
Richard Stevenson

1. Thank you for comments and proposals regarding policy objectives for the DOC 2 and DMC zones and appropriate height and density limits for these areas. As stated in the Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Office Core 2 (DOC 2) zone was established to provide “*areas adjacent to the office core appropriate for office expansion and where a transition in density to mixed-use areas is desirable.*”

The Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zone was established to provide:

Areas adjacent to the office core, office expansion areas and retail core that provide a transition in the level of activity and scale of development. Areas designated DMC are characterized by a diversity of uses. The DMC land use district is intended to:

- *Permit office and commercial use, but at lower densities than in office areas;*
 - *Encourage housing and other uses generating activity without substantially contributing to peak hour traffic; and*
 - *Promote development diversity and compatibility with adjacent areas through a range of height limits.*
2. Through provisions established in the TDR program for transfers of development rights from affordable housing structures, landmark buildings, and open space, commercial development rights can be transferred within the DMC, DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones. While under current provisions TDR is not used to create new housing projects, it has been an effective tool to help preserve existing housing resources, and has been used to secure funding for several low-income housing structures in the Denny Triangle. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative, which includes additional TDR provisions.
 3. Raising the maximum FARs can increase the amount of floor area in a project gained through bonuses. The degree to which this increase exceeds current conditions depends on whether the base FAR is increased as well, and to what extent relative to increases in the maximum FAR, and whether or not developers build to increased maximum limits.
 4. Your comments recommending elimination of upper level setbacks and coverage limits are noted. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative.
 5. Thank you for your comments on the prospective benefits of your proposals.

Letter 28
Roger Wagoner

1. Thank you for your comments. They touch on some of the important matters to be considered by decisionmakers.
2. Please see Chapter 1 of this Final EIS for additional information on the Preferred Alternative.

Letter 29
Irene Wall

1. Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS described overall objectives of the studied alternatives, and documented the background of how the proposal came about, as an outgrowth of neighborhood planning in

Downtown. Please see Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this Final EIS for additional discussion of alternatives, objectives and the public interest.

2. The cited Comprehensive Plan amendment concepts were tabled in 2004. The South Lake Union item cited would not have incorporated that neighborhood into the *Downtown* Urban Center. Projections of employment and/or residential growth for neighborhoods and sites outside Downtown will remain relevant to those particular areas. Downtown is subject to its own residential and employment growth trends and projections, which contribute to the need for planning and zoning analysis. Please refer to Chapters 1 and 3 of this Final EIS for further discussion of the Preferred Alternative and growth issues.
3. The topic of cumulative impacts on energy systems was discussed on page 3-208 of the Draft EIS. Recent updated information from City Light indicates that a new substation is projected to be needed to serve the study area after 2020, several years later than indicated in the Draft EIS. City Light is addressing and monitoring the Downtown and South Lake Union system relationships and necessary improvements.
4. According to the parking analysis for the Draft EIS (see Table 61 on DEIS page 3-199), there would not be a net loss of off-street parking. Rather, off-street parking would increase considerably under any of the alternatives. While approximately 7,000 to 7,500 existing parking spaces would be eliminated by future development, that development would provide an estimated 17,000 spaces to serve new commercial and residential uses. Depending upon how successful efforts are to encourage transit use, the projected demand for parking could exceed the supply by approximately 2,500 to 6,750 spaces in the year 2020. However, this exceedance does not account for potential choices by parking providers to build more parking to satisfy demand. Transit capacity will depend upon the funding choices made over the next 16 years, but several modes of transit are expected to be available.

Regarding the location of parking in a structure, the Draft EIS did identify a potential impact on streetscape and residential character due to parking on floors above street level. This is particularly an issue with residential development, because above-grade parking accessory to residential use does not count as chargeable FAR, so there is no incentive to provide it below grade, as there would be for commercial development. Parking above grade must be screened, and there are special screening standards, including screening by another use (such as retail) along the street front, that apply to parking located at street level. These standards vary according to the pedestrian designation of a street (see the response to comment 29 in Letter 5 above).

5. Thank you for your comments that suggest linking Downtown height and density increases to additional private investment in urban villages outside Downtown.
6. Thank you for your comments that suggest linking height and density increases to provision of needed amenities. This already occurs under the existing bonus system. Additional floor area for commercial uses above a "base limit" is gained by obtaining bonuses through which developers provide or contribute to the production and preservation of affordable housing, public open space, landmark preservation, human services, childcare and other public benefits. The TDC program also involves providing or contributing to a fund for public amenities in the Denny Triangle. The Preferred Alternative includes additional provisions that will aid in funding affordable housing and other needs, including provisions allowing residential development to build to proposed height limits only if projects contribute to affordable housing mitigation.

7. Thank you for your comments suggesting contract rezones as a mechanism for securing public benefits. A contract rezone typically occurs for one site at a time, with a contractual aspect that specifies the responsibilities of the applicant and the city. It allows customized conditioning that would apply to each site depending upon its unique characteristics and impacts. Conceptually, supposing an alternative comprised of site-by-site contract rezones was possible, it would be likely to considerably slow down the development review process and project decisionmaking for Downtown building proposals. Each proposal would be subject to individualized review and negotiation of zone characteristics and conditioning, and each would require Council decision processes. Such a system would not likely be feasible or advisable. It would contradict the concept of having systematic zone categories and regulations applicable within defined areas.
8. Thank you for your comments on zoning concepts and zoning as an incentive. Please see Chapters 1, 3 and 4 of this Final EIS for additional discussion of the Preferred Alternative. The Draft EIS did consider other approaches to promoting residential development, including the rezoning of some areas in Belltown and the Denny Triangle to less intensive residential designations in Alternative 3. Existing incentive programs have been successful in generating resources for a variety of public benefits that have contributed to the livability and vitality of Downtown, including landmark preservation and the production and preservation of low-income housing. Incentives developed to capture benefits during periods of strong economic activity cannot be adequately evaluated during economic lulls in the real estate market.
9. The suggested type of cost/benefit analysis is not required by the City's SEPA Rules and is beyond the scope of this EIS.
10. Thank you for your comments on view protection and alley vacations.
11. Based on the conclusions in the Draft EIS, creating building forms similar to those described as "Vancouver style" would require additional regulatory strategies. Please see Chapters 1 and 4 of this Final EIS for discussion of the Preferred Alternative, which would be comparatively better than current regulations in encouraging slimmer building profiles. Choices made following this EIS process will determine what specific packages of zoning changes are considered by decisionmakers, perhaps directed at bulk controls that will influence the shape of Downtown buildings. This will influence the net result, in terms of building bulk and open space character of future development.
12. Thank you for your comments on protecting low-income and subsidized housing.

Letter 30
David Williams

1. Thank you for your comments.



RECEIVED
JAN 12 2004

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY,
TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
128 - 10th Avenue SE • PO Box 42525 • Olympia, Washington 98504 • (360) 725-4000
Dept. of Design
Construction & Land Use

January 8, 2004

Ms. Diane Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning and Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

RE: Proposed downtown height and density changes.

Dear Ms. Sugimura:

Thank you for sending the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for proposed amendments to Seattle's development regulations that we received on November 19, 2003. We recognize the substantial investment of time, energy, and resources that these documents represent.

We especially like the following:

- We applaud the initiative to allow more density, activity, and investment in downtown Seattle. The Growth Management Act (GMA) calls for urban growth served by efficient multimodal transportation, economic development that is consistent with planning, and affordable housing for all segments of the population. By encouraging infill development and allowing additional investment in the core of the city, these proposed changes to Seattle's development regulations are likely to support achievement of these GMA goals.

Seattle has already done a great deal to prepare downtown for an increase in development potential. Downtown is the most prominent urban center in the state, benefiting from vibrant economic and social activity and diverse land uses. It is served by major public infrastructure, and additional investments continue to be made to ensure that people are able to live, work, and access downtown. Development regulations allow a mixture of uses and a pedestrian-oriented environment. Given that this groundwork is in place, an increase in density could be very positive for the community.

- We commend the City of Seattle for the thoroughness of its draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The document takes an in-depth look at the impacts and trade-offs of the

four alternatives (including no action) considered. Of particular use to decision-makers is the consideration the document gives to mitigating measures for the undesired impacts of each alternative. These and other measures will be essential in the effort to balance the many aims of community and economic development.

We have the following comments and suggestions you may wish to consider as you evaluate these and future proposed amendments. Intensification of downtown development could accomplish a number of GMA goals. However, good community planning calls for striking a balance among the full spectrum of community goals. We strongly support examining the mitigating measures identified by the DEIS, and others, that address impacts of increased height and bulk, in the spirit of balancing the desire to accommodate density with the need to maintain a quality environment.

1

In addition, several potential impacts strike us as particularly important to mitigate:

- The DEIS is clear that intensification of development could endanger downtown's supply of affordable housing and housing resources. We urge Seattle to provide and leverage the funding, and to take other steps, as necessary to preserve existing affordable and market rate housing and housing resources downtown, and to create additional units in all price ranges.
- The DEIS points out that under any of the scenarios (including the no action alternative) downtown is not meeting the comprehensive plan goals for open space. We acknowledge that, in general, intensive development is likely to represent the highest and best use of land in this area. Nonetheless, in order to foster livability downtown we advise the city to plan for public open space in the area and carefully weigh the impacts of additional development on its availability. Also, given that public open space within downtowns consists largely of the sidewalks and streets, we strongly recommend the continuation and expansion of efforts to improve the interface between pedestrians and vehicles such as road crossings, the addition of pedestrian amenities including street trees and furniture, and strengthening policies requiring development to be pedestrian and transit oriented.

2

In addition to the mitigation measures proposed in the DEIS the city could consider meeting the intent of the comprehensive plan by facilitating creation of areas that serve as open spaces within and on top of buildings. In a highly urban environment, structured public, semi-public, and private spaces such as lobby atriums and rooftop gardens could help to meet the intent of the open space goal, bring trees and plants into the city, and even help to reduce the stormwater impacts of additional development. We suggest that methods to foster such practices be considered, including review of development regulations to identify and consider removing regulatory barriers to such practices, and working with developers through regulatory, voluntary, and/or incentive-based approaches. For more information, the City of Seattle's own Office of Sustainability & Environment is an excellent resource (and may already have provided input on this DEIS). In addition, a number of organizations, including Green Roofs for Healthy Cities (<http://www.greenroofs.ca/grhcc/index.html>) and Project for Public Spaces (<http://www.pps.org/>), provide information and resources related to urban open spaces and rooftop gardens.

3

- As proposed in the DEIS, the transportation impacts of additional development should be mitigated through fostering transit and alternative travel modes. We are particularly impressed with the Transportation Demand Strategies proposed for transportation and parking impacts, and support the creation of a Transportation Management Association of downtown stakeholders (DEIS, page 1-29). Among many excellent sources for information regarding tools for transportation-efficient development, *Strategies and Tools to Implement Transportation*, prepared for the Washington State Transportation Commission, September 2003, is a current and exhaustive resource.
- We support the suggestions made in a letter to Seattle dated December 2, 2003, from Gregory Griffith of the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation regarding preserving historic assets in the area.

In summary, we encourage the city to continue to move forward in selecting a preferred alternative, and strongly advise that an appropriate package of mitigation strategies be adopted simultaneously. Throughout this and other planning processes, we advise you to consider downtown Seattle both as the heart of the state's largest urban center, and as a cluster of neighborhoods in their own right (as acknowledged through the neighborhood planning process). Due consideration should be paid to ensuring that the area will function well both as a regional center and at the neighborhood level. While continuing to foster development in the area, we suggest that to the extent possible GMA and community goals be implemented at a fine-grained level within neighborhoods. This approach may call for additional mitigation measures, or possibly some reduction of development intensity. We argue that regulations that foster both development as well as key elements of neighborhood livability, cultural heritage, housing affordability, and social diversity can and should be a part of the continuing development of downtown.

Congratulations to you and your staff for the good work these proposals embody. If you have any questions or concerns about our comments or any other growth management issues, please call me at (360) 725-3048, or Ike Nwankwo at (360) 725-3056. We extend our continued support to the City of Seattle in achieving the goals of growth management.

Sincerely,



Elliott Barnett
Assistant Planner
Growth Management Services

EB:lw

cc: Gordon Clowers, Planner, City of Seattle
Ike Nwankwo, Technical & Financial Assistance Manager, CTED



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

1063 S. Capitol Way, Suite 106 • Olympia, Washington 98501

(Mailing Address) PO Box 48343 • Olympia, Washington 98504-8343

Phone (360) 586-3067 FAX (360) 586-3067 Web Site: www.oahp.wa.gov

December 2, 2003

Ms. Diane Sugimura
City of Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

In future correspondence please refer to:

Log: 120203-07-KI

Re: Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS

RECEIVED
DEC 04 2003
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dear Ms. Sugimura:

The Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) is in receipt of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) regarding the above referenced proposal. From the document, I understand that the Seattle City Council is considering adopting three alternatives that will increase allowable maximum heights and densities of buildings in several downtown zones including the Denny Triangle, Commercial Core, and Belltown.

In response, review of the DEIS by OAHP staff leads to our support of the height and density changes in concept. This support is derived from our understanding that the proposed changes are intended to foster expanded activity and uses (including residential) in the target neighborhoods. However, we strongly maintain that implementation of increased heights and densities should not come at the expense of historic properties in these neighborhoods. Historic properties (buildings, structures, districts, sites, and objects that are 50 years of age and older) are increasingly rare in these areas and already under intense development pressures. Therefore, I recommend that adoption of increased downtown height and density changes also be accompanied by commensurate protective mechanisms for historic properties. We recognize that the DEIS identifies several mitigation strategies. We also support these strategies but reiterate that mitigation measures should be implemented in tandem with proposed height and density changes. In addition, it should be noted that protective measures be considered for more than already designated City Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places properties. Properties potentially eligible for designation (for City and/or National Register designation) should be identified (inventoried) upon program implementation and receive protection from any proposed application of increased heights and densities. It is also recommend that local historic preservation entities and preservation professionals be invited to participate in the increased height and density program design and implementation. Such participation in the program implementation by the preservation community should help to avoid conflicts in the long-term and streamline the development process.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this proposal. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 360-586-3073 or gregg@cted.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Gregory Griffith
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Cc: Karen Gordon
Ike Nwankwo, Growth Management





King County

Water and Land Resources Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

King Street Center

201 South Jackson Street, Suite 600

Seattle, WA 98104-3855

206-296-6519 206-296-0192 Fax

RECEIVED

FEB 04 2004

Dept. of Design
Construction & Land Use

January 28, 2004

Diane Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104-5070

Dear Director Sugimura:

I am writing to record the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Downtown Height and Density Changes dated November 2003. The city's efforts to increase housing opportunities in the downtown area are to be commended. These efforts will help the region achieve our growth management goals and create vibrant urban centers. However, we are concerned that the alternatives considered in the DEIS will have potential negative impacts on the King County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program.

In April 2000, the City of Seattle and King County forged a regional partnership to transfer rural residential density into the Denny Triangle pursuant to an interlocal agreement unanimously adopted via King County Ordinance No. 13794. This partnership achieves a number of mutually beneficial policy goals, including focusing growth in urban areas and limiting growth in rural areas, as well as protection of drinking water quality in the Cedar and Tolt River Basins, and protecting salmon habitat. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) directs development to urban areas discouraging inappropriate conversion of undeveloped rural land into sprawling, low-density development, and encourages the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands.

Adopted Countywide Planning Policies direct jurisdictions in King County to implement programs and regulations to protect and maintain the rural character of rural, farm, and forest lands, and to direct growth to cities and urban centers. Rural and agricultural production district areas in the County are recognized as containing important Countywide public benefits such as forestry, agricultural resources and salmon habitat. Finally, under provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) the County and the City share a strong interest in the preservation of salmon habitat.

1

In our current partnership, lands near Seattle's two protected watersheds, the Cedar and Tolt, will be protected; ensuring continued high-quality drinking water for the region. Priority rural sending sites include areas with endangered species habitat, open space/regional trail access, and wildlife corridors. Finally, housing supply and choices in downtown Seattle will grow, directly supporting Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and the Denny Triangle's neighborhood plan.

Alternatives in the DEIS propose to increase residential and employment opportunities to meet growth targets. While we applaud these proposals, they also eliminate or severely reduce the receiving capacity of the Denny Triangle neighborhood to accept density from the rural area. Alternative One eliminates the King County TDR Program, and Alternatives Two and Three shrink the potential receiving area within the Denny Triangle.

1

As a commitment to improve the livability of the Denny Triangle neighborhood, King County has earmarked \$500,000 in local funds for public amenities. Under the terms of the Denny Triangle Interlocal Agreement, King County has already transferred \$100,000 to the City of Seattle Design of Greenstreets. The remaining \$400,000 in local funds plus a \$432,000 Federal Transit Administration grant will be transferred to the City when development rights are transferred into the Denny Triangle.

As cited in the DEIS, there are at least six Denny Triangle projects considering accepting development rights. Two transfers, using a combined total of 51 rural development rights, are scheduled for completion in the next few months. Unfortunately, these projects will evaporate if density and height limits are increased without maintaining the current requirement to acquire rural development rights.

2

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments.

Sincerely,



Daryl Grigsby
Division Director

cc: Pam Bissonnette, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Bob Burns, Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Mark Sollitto, Manager, Transfer of Development Rights Program, Water and Land
Resources Division, DNRP



King County Department of Transportation
Metro Transit Division
201 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-3856

February 27, 2004

Dennis Meier
City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1900
Seattle, WA 98104-5070

RE: City of Seattle Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS

Dear Mr. Meier:

This letter provides comments from the King County Metro Transit Division on the Department of Planning and Development's (DPD) Height and Density Limit DEIS. We generally support increases to height limits and density, but all alternatives generate significant impacts on the ability of transit to serve the community. We recommend that the City develop a plan to mitigate the transportation impacts of population growth and develop transit-friendly infrastructure in order to ensure transit continues to be a viable form of transportation.

Heights of buildings are only one component of smart growth, which can be defined as a type of development with the goals of minimizing dependence on auto transportation, reducing air pollution, and preserving open space by channeling dense, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use growth into existing communities. A comprehensive program is needed that does not simply increase heights, but also makes public transportation a feasible alternative to the car, develops mixed-use communities (especially emphasizing housing), and encourages development in urban areas. These comments specifically address how the City can make public transportation more viable in the future, as a healthy public transportation system is vital to dense urban-core communities.

The role of the developer has often been overlooked in discussions about smart growth, but the high rise building and high rise developers do more for transportation demand management than many other available mechanisms by significantly increasing density. Developers have been calling for increased density through fewer restrictions on height limits and are calling for increases above those in Alternative 1. This creates an excellent opportunity to link public interest in reduced traffic congestion with the interests of developers to increase building heights. This link can be created by forming incentives to encourage property owners to invest more fully in the transportation system and their tenants, and by creating an environment in which transit can flourish.

1

Because the DEIS holds population and employment constant across alternatives, it does not identify the actual impacts of adding additional height and density. The analysis addresses only redistribution of density within the downtown area, holding totals constant. And by excluding evolving nearby activity centers from the analysis, the DEIS does not discuss the cumulative impacts of adding density to the Denny Triangle and South Lake Union. For these reasons we are focusing our comments on the general conditions that need to be met for transit to succeed with meeting increased transportation demands under any of the proposed land use changes.

2

3

Our suggestions for a successful transit system are organized into two categories related to creating the link between public and developer interests: transit impacts and market-based incentives. Primary concerns include the following: level of transit service and layover space required to serve increased numbers of riders; increased transit delay; reductions in available layover spaces; the importance of incorporating market-based incentives, parking policy changes and transportation bonuses to support increases in heights and housing; and mitigation of the impacts of increased density and congestion.

Transit Impacts

The transportation study only addresses two corridors in relation to transit impacts: Stewart Street and Olive Way. Much of the regional transit service uses these corridors, but local Seattle neighborhood services use other corridors. The selected screenlines (Denny Way and north of Seneca) begin to address the local service, but may not give a comprehensive picture of the level of service and consequent impacts on congestion.

4

Existing and Planned Transit Service Issues

Given the projected amount of growth, servicing the Denny Triangle area will be difficult under all scenarios with current levels of transit service. The amount of transit service needed to serve Downtown Seattle's projected demand in the future is greater than can be provided under current Metro revenue projections. Planned and current transit infrastructure in downtown is not currently focused on the Denny Triangle portion of the study, where much of the population and employment growth is projected to occur. Current light rail and monorail plans bypass the Denny Triangle area. Future light rail expansion will supplant bus service in the downtown transit tunnel eventually resulting in elimination of tunnel service to Convention Place Station. Planning needs to begin now for serving the new populations and funding the new service given tight budgetary constraints.

5

Serving an expanded high-density office core in the Denny Triangle would be extremely difficult with existing transit service. Currently, express buses from the I-5 express lanes, I-90 and I-5 south corridors enter the CBD at the south and work their way north. Except for the bus tunnel, transit operation through the CBD is slow and unreliable, decreasing the attractiveness of transit to points north of the commercial core. Seattle's Center City Circulation Study would put buses serving Seattle neighborhoods north and south of the CBD on Third Avenue, requiring passengers to transfer or walk a significant distance to reach the Denny Triangle area. When South Lake Union development is added to the equation, these challenges are magnified.

To provide similarly attractive services to the Denny Triangle from these corridors, either (1) the travel delay and variability need to be reduced through priority or separation from traffic to allow existing routes to serve both north and south downtown areas, (2) separate routes need to be provided entering the CBD at the north, or (3) a high capacity transit connection is needed that places a station in the area where density will increase. Any of these options would require significant resources.

Transit Delay

The three change alternatives cause more delay due to congestion at the transit screenlines identified in the DEIS than the baseline, and rising congestion increases transit operating costs. Given the projected increase in congestion across all alternatives, the City must make it a priority to reduce the impacts of increased congestion on transit by investing in additional transit only lanes or corridors, transit priority at additional stop lights, queue jumps, increased parking restrictions near bus stops, etc. There is some mention of possible mitigation measures for transit, but the chosen mitigation measures should aggressively address the delay issues and be co-developed and coordinated with Metro.

Reductions in Available Layover Space

A large number of regional and local bus routes begin and end service in the north Downtown Seattle area. It is critical for efficient transit system operation (e.g., reliable schedules and maintenance of cost-effective operating costs) that layover space is provided as close as possible to the beginning and end of the service portion of a route. As noted in the DEIS, increased density and development in the Denny Triangle and/or Denny Regrade areas will make it increasingly difficult for Metro to maintain existing and/or accommodate new, on-street layover space, on an interim and/or long-term basis, due to competing curbspace uses and Green Streets objectives. At the same time, additional service provided to the area will result in increased layover needs.

There are a number of side streets in the Study Area that have been designated as Green Streets and that are currently utilized for on-street layover. The City needs to decide whether layover spaces are incompatible with a Green Street designation. If layover is determined to be incompatible with Green Streets, then we (the City and KCM) need to develop a plan and a written agreement to address this issue prior to the City adopting standards to redevelop these streets. If some streets morph into Green Streets and transit layover is incompatible, then other streets must morph into other uses compatible with transit layover. If transit layover is compatible with Green Streets, then we need to develop an agreement stating this and acknowledging that transit is part of the Green Street concept.

All the alternatives result in reductions to both current and potential layover sites with the no-change alternative causing the most significant decrease in current and potential layover sites. On-street layover information found in Figure 34, "Potential Future Layover On-Street Layovers," is outdated and should be updated in the FEIS to reflect current and potential layover spaces (see Attachment 1). In consideration of the updated layover and Green Streets information, the FEIS should include recalculations of layover impact data for all alternatives including no-change.

6

7

Lastly, the FEIS needs to address how existing layover spaces will be protected and new spaces provided that would preserve cost effective transit service for the CBD. The City must be willing to demonstrate a commitment to KCM to maintain and/or replace on-street layover spaces until additional interim and/or long-term layover facilities are available to replace those spaces lost through anticipated development and transit service growth in the north Downtown Seattle area.

7

Other Issues

- Improve pedestrian amenity requirements in the Denny Triangle by making them comparable to downtown Seattle.
- Develop incentives for narrower buildings to increase opportunities for pedestrian walkways, thoroughfares and open space.

8

Market-Based Incentives

The proposed alternatives do not address parking issues and do not incorporate transportation-specific height bonuses. The DEIS outlines many traffic and congestion impacts resulting from future employment and residential growth; the transportation height bonuses and parking policy changes recommended below can be used to mitigate these impacts. In addition to the parking and height bonus suggestions, we follow with a preferred approach.

Parking Issues

The current parking minimum reflects an inflated supply of parking, especially for future years. We recommend allowing the market to determine the number of parking spaces below the maximum through the following measures:

- Remove or substantially decrease the parking minimum [Spillover parking problems could be problematic, but given the high proportion of metered parking and the availability of almost no free parking, spillover effects would not likely be significant in the downtown. More people may choose to park in outer communities, but this would simply put upward pressure on parking prices in those areas, thus discouraging more people from driving.]
- Simplify the process used to take advantage of reductions below the parking minimum
- Include a reduction in parking requirements in exchange for contributions to a transportation mitigation fund (additional if some contribution is already required), pedestrian/bike improvement fund, transportation program fund, or other purpose
- Increase the percentage reduction (greater than the current 15 percent) in parking construction if residents in addition to employees are given free bus passes for at least five (5) years.

9

Incorporating Transportation in Height Bonuses

The transportation bonuses outlined below expand available bonuses, mitigate the impacts of increased development on transit, and further transportation concurrency (tying development and transportation together). Expanding the types of bonuses available would increase the likelihood of a developer taking advantage of a bonus, would better incorporate market incentives in the

10

development code, and would encourage positive amenities through market forces rather than prescriptive standards.

Suggestions to incorporate transportation include:

- *The Zero Traffic Building* – If a building incorporates all of the items below, or a combination sufficient to significantly reduce trips generated to and from the building then the developer has the ability to build up to the maximum FAR. Contributions to the Area-Wide Transit Service Fund and the Mitigation Fund would be weighted more heavily than other bonuses due to the higher impact on improving the transit operating environment.
- *Transportation Incentive FAR Bonus* – Height bonuses in exchange for offering transportation incentives to employees and/or residents beyond what is normally required in a Transportation Management Programs (TMP).
- *Transportation Infrastructure* – Bonus FAR for building transportation infrastructure focused on alternative modes like showers, lockers, permanent bicycle storage, contributions to a Bikestation, Flexcar parking spaces or incentives, and/or pedestrian amenities. The City of Portland has incorporated this incentive structure in its code.
- *Commercial Bonus* – Developers get more commercial space for including residents in their transportation program and get increasing amounts for increased commitment (at least a five-year commitment).
- *Area-Wide Transit Service Fund* – Height bonuses for contributing to area-wide transit service fund, pedestrian/bike improvement fund, or transportation program fund. This could pay for some of the needed transit service in the Denny Triangle.
- *Mitigation Fund* – We support development of a Transportation Mitigation Program as described in the DEIS and as currently exists with the Bank of America Tower.
- *Improving Density* – The City currently incorporates height bonuses for creating a public open space, constructing a hillclimb assist, shopping corridor, or transit tunnel station access. It would be beneficial to expand this definition to include provision of transit layover space, sidewalk improvements, striping a bike lane, surface bus stop improvements, or others at a specific level of monetary commitment.
- *Incentives to Unbundle Residential Parking* – Encourage building owners and managers to charge for leases and parking separately. This idea would especially work in mixed-use developments.

Preferred Approach

The preferred approach would see the developer as a constructive partner with mutually compatible objectives. Specific components of the approach would include:

- No parking required for commercial, retail, or other non-residential. The developer would decide the amount of parking below the maximum required for each development.
- Offer increased heights in exchange for investments in transportation because developers have an economic motivation for increasing heights and encourage the Zero Traffic Building.

10

11

- Place significant energy on creating an Area-Wide Transit Service Fund, funded by developer contributions, to help fund service in areas with less extensive service (e.g. Denny Triangle).
- The City's Circulation report anticipates transit will carry almost all growth in future trips to the Seattle CBD. Given the limited availability of additional transit funds and the significant growth in transit trips, encourage housing within or proximate to high rise development as a strong form of traffic mitigation.

11

Recommendations

The preferred alternative would increase maximum height limits above the current guidelines (similar to Alternative 1 or higher) and would be part of a program aimed at improving the operating environment for transit and incorporating housing by creating residential friendly zoning (as in Alternative 3). The preferred alternative would allow more height above the base through bonuses to increase density and would expand allowable bonuses to incorporate more extensive transportation bonuses so developers commit to the community by providing housing, transportation benefits, or public amenities in exchange for increased height.

12

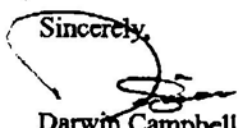
Metro hopes to actively participate in a broader process to ensure we can both maximize transit use to the downtown, and effectively deliver the transit services that new development will require. A healthy public transportation system is essential to creating a thriving urban community. The chosen alternative needs to be part of a comprehensive program that not only increases heights, but also increases the viability of public transportation.

13

To discuss further, please contact Sharon Slebodnick, Senior Transit Planner, Transit Route Facilities, at 206-684-1321; Rob Fellows, Senior Transit Planner, Service Planning, at 206-684-1449; or Sunny Knott, Transit Planner, Market Development, at 206-263-6397.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,


Darwin Campbell
Acting General Manager
King County Metro Transit

Attachment

cc: Jim Jacobson, Deputy General Manager, KC Metro Transit
Eric Gleason, Manager, Service Development, KC Metro Transit
Sharon Slebodnick, Senior Transit Planner, Transit Route Facilities, KC Metro Transit
Rob Fellows, Senior Transit Planner, Service Planning, KC Metro Transit
Sunny Knott, Transit Planner, Market Development, KC Metro Transit

ATTACHMENT 1
PAGE 1

Current On-Street Transit Layover

Count:	Direction of Travel:	On Street:	Side of On Street:	Side of Intersection:	Cross Street:	Transit Agency:
1	Southbound	2nd Ave	West	Nearside	Lenora St.	METRO
2	Northbound	8th Ave	East	Farside	Blanchard St.	METRO
3	Northbound	8th Ave	East	Farside	Westlake Ave.	METRO
4	Southbound	9th Ave	East	Nearside	Pine St.	METRO
5	Southbound	9th Ave	West	Nearside	Stewart St.	METRO
6	Eastbound	Battery St.	South	Nearside	4th Ave.	METRO
7	Westbound	Bell St.	North	Farside	7th Ave.	METRO
8	Westbound	Bell St.	North	Farside	6th Ave.	METRO
9	Westbound	Bell St.	North	Farside	8th Ave.	METRO
10	Westbound	Bell St.	South	Farside	7th Ave.	METRO
11	Westbound	Bell St.	South	Nearside	6th Ave.	METRO
12	Westbound	Bell St.	North	Nearside	6th Ave.	METRO
13	Westbound	Bell St.	North	Nearside	5th Ave.	METRO
14	Westbound	Bell St.	South	Farside	6th Ave.	METRO
15	Westbound	Bell St.	North	Nearside	7th Ave.	METRO
16	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Nearside	2nd Ave.	METRO
17	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Farside	5th Ave.	METRO
18	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Farside	6th Ave.	METRO
19	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Nearside	7th Ave.	METRO
20	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	North	Farside	7th Ave.	METRO
21	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	North	Nearside	8th Ave.	METRO
22	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Farside	1st Ave.	METRO
23	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Farside	7th Ave.	METRO
24	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Farside	6th Ave.	METRO
25	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Nearside	5th Ave.	METRO
26	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Farside	5th Ave.	METRO
27	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Farside	3rd Ave.	METRO
28	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Farside	4th Ave.	METRO
29	Westbound	Lenora St.	South	Farside	5th Ave.	METRO
30	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Nearside	6th Ave.	METRO
31	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Nearside	2nd Ave.	METRO
32	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Nearside	7th Ave.	METRO
33	Westbound	Lenora St.	North	Nearside	4th Ave.	METRO
34	Southbound	Minor Ave	West	Nearside	Stewart St.	METRO
35	Eastbound	Olive Way	West	Nearside	9th Ave.	METRO
36	Eastbound	Olive Way	South	Nearside	Terry Ave.	METRO
37	Westbound	Stewart St.	North	Nearside	Boren Ave.	CT
38	Westbound	Stewart St.	North	Nearside	Yale Ave N.	CT
39	Westbound	Stewart St.	North	Nearside	Minor Ave.	CT
40	Eastbound	Virginia St.	South	Farside	2nd Ave.	METRO
41	Eastbound	Virginia St.	South	Nearside	3rd Ave.	METRO
42	Eastbound	Virginia St.	South	Farside	4th Ave.	METRO
43	Eastbound	Virginia St.	South	Nearside	4th Ave.	METRO
44	Northbound	Warren Pl.	East	Farside	1st Ave.	METRO

N:\Zones\Layover\Tabular List of NCBD Terminals

Prepared By: Daniel Well, Metro, 3/1/2004

ATTACHMENT 1
PAGE 2

Potential On-Street Transit Layover

Count:	Direction of Travel:	On Street:	Side of On Street:	Side of Intersection:	Cross Street:
--------	-------------------------	------------	-----------------------	--------------------------	---------------

1	Eastbound	Virginia St.	North	Nearside	2nd Ave.
2	Eastbound	Virginia St.	South	Farside	3rd Ave.
3	Eastbound	Virginia St.	North	Farside	3rd Ave.
4	Eastbound	Virginia St.	North	Farside	5th Ave.
5	Eastbound	Virginia St.	North	Nearside	6th Ave.
6	Eastbound	Virginia St.	South	Nearside	Westlake Ave.
7	Westbound	Lenora St.	South	Farside	7th Ave.
8	Westbound	Lenora St.	South	Farside	6th Ave.
9	Westbound	Lenora St.	South	Farside	4th Ave.
10	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Nearside	4th Ave.
11	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Farside	7th Ave.
12	Eastbound	Blanchard St.	South	Farside	8th Ave.
13	Westbound	Bell St.	South	Farside	8th Ave.
14	Westbound	Bell St.	South	Farside	4th Ave.
15	Westbound	Bell St.	South	Farside	3rd Ave.
16	Eastbound	Battery St.	South	Farside	2nd Ave.
17	Eastbound	Battery St.	North	Farside	3rd Ave.
18	Eastbound	Battery St.	South	Farside	5th Ave.
19	Westbound	Wall St.	South	Nearside	5th Ave.
20	Westbound	Wall St.	South	Farside	3rd Ave.
21	Westbound	Wall St.	South	Nearside	2nd Ave.
22	Southbound	5th Ave.	East	Farside	Wall St.
23	Southbound	5th Ave.	East	Farside	Battery St.
24	Northbound	Westlake Ave.	West	Farside	Denny Way
25	Westbound	John St.	South	Farside	Westlake Ave.
26	Westbound	John St.	South	Nearside	9th Ave.
27	Southbound	9th Ave.	East	Nearside	Denny Way
28	Southbound	9th Ave.	West	Nearside	Denny Way



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Marty Curry, Executive Director

John Owen, Chair
George Blomberg,
Vice Chair
Anjali Bhagat
Angela Brooks
Thomas Eanes
Jerry Finrow
Matthew Kitchen
Jeanne Krikawa
Lyn Krizanich
Joe Quintana
Stephen G. Sheehy
Mimi Sheridan
Tony To
Paul Tomita

Marty Curry,
Executive Director
Barbara E. Wilson,
Analyst

February 27, 2004

Dennis Meier
Department of Planning and Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Seattle Planning Commission Comments on the Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS

Dear Mr. Meier:

The Planning Commission appreciates the opportunity to contribute its comments on the Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS. This is a complicated set of issues, and we applaud the work of DPD staff in developing and analyzing the alternatives and in assessing potential impacts. We also appreciate the extension of the comment period and additional opportunity through the February 24 public forum to hear from the public.

It appears that the alternatives are designed to present different configurations for increased height and density and their impacts, without necessarily representing four distinct fully developed packages. Hence, the Planning Commission has not taken a position on the alternatives at this point, and is looking to the Final EIS to provide a thorough description and rationale for more refined alternatives with detailed analysis of impacts and mitigation measures

Overall Comments

In general the DEIS document is clear, straightforward and well written. It provides a very good summary with tables that present a comparison of the four alternatives that is easy to understand. The report also makes good use of graphics except for the initial massing map showing all four alternatives – this shows barely any perceptible differences among the alternatives. Maps in the document leave some confusion about the actual boundaries between study area and Belltown and where the transition is between them. **The Final EIS should provide a clear map that shows the boundaries of the study area as well as boundaries of the adjacent neighborhoods.**

Given the Mayor's recent call for more density (doubling the downtown population targets) in the Center City and taller slimmer buildings, it is not clear whether the range of alternatives presented in this document is expected to achieve that goal. The Final EIS should more explicitly describe the Mayor's proposal and address the extent to which these ideas can be incorporated into the existing four alternatives. **The Final EIS should also reference how well these alternatives achieve the Comp Plan goals of concentrating growth in the center city.**

The range of alternatives does a fairly reasonable job of bracketing the possible scenarios and in identifying possible impacts. However, Commissioners note that it would be helpful to have an alternative that encourages housing and job creation while providing more open space and a livable environment. **The preferred alternative that we assume will be presented in the Final EIS should strive to draw the best features from several alternatives and pay close attention to the livability of the areas where residential development is encouraged.**

3

Overall the mitigation section is not very strong or detailed. This may reflect the nature of the proposals, but **the Final EIS should be expanded to provide more detailed analysis of the potential methods for mitigating identified impacts. It should also discuss more explicitly the public benefit that is achieved with each of the alternatives.**

4

Finally the Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program discussion is somewhat confusing. **The Final EIS should provide a more thorough assessment of the experience of the TDC program and discuss its future potential based on the actual experience the City has had with it and how it would work in the proposed alternatives.**

5

Underlying Assumptions; Overall Approach

The City's Comprehensive Plan, King County and the region goals share a growth management strategy based on the premise that more density of jobs and housing in the core cities is critical to preserving open space, limiting additional sprawl and reducing the growth of traffic congestion. As the region's primary urban center, downtown Seattle plays an important role in accommodating future growth and density. An additional assumption of the City's Comprehensive Plan is that urban centers will be safe, attractive pedestrian oriented environments with housing that serves a broad range of incomes and a wide variety of services within walking distance of residences.

6

The Final EIS should provide a clearer description of the overall approach represented by each of the alternatives – e.g. residential enclaves versus more mixing of commercial and residential uses, including an analysis of the pros and cons of each of them in reaching Comp Plan and neighborhood plan goals. This should include a clear indication of the City's approach and commitment to providing the services and amenities that are essential to dense in-city residential living. It should also discuss how the alternatives contribute to the overall balance among housing, jobs and amenities within the City's densest urban center.

The Final EIS also should provide a more detailed discussion of the implications of these various alternatives on the other urban centers and villages in Seattle and in the region. For example, if this additional commercial and residential development does not occur in downtown Seattle, what is the impact regarding the demand for density and growth in other urban centers, in lower density neighborhoods in Seattle, and in other areas in the region? What is the impact of significantly increasing housing supply downtown on housing prices and affordability? Are the projected housing and commercial development targets realistic in terms of projected demand for commercial/office space and housing? The Final EIS should address these issues, with more analysis of the market for housing, including the market for families with children and related services such as schools.

7

Specific Comments

Population and Employment

This section provides a thorough background in population and employment trends as well as projections for future growth. **The Final EIS should acknowledge the uncertainties of projections for both population and employment growth in the downtown core, noting the variety of factors that influence actual growth over time.**

8

Final EIS should also address the implications of increased capacity for both employment and residential population in the downtown core. What impact does this have on other urban centers within the Center City or nodes in other urban centers? What is the projected impact of increasing employment and housing in South Lake Union (and potentially in Interbay) on the potential for concentrating development in downtown, or current efforts to promote more housing and commercial development in Northgate? Also, does the elimination of the Transfer of Development Credits (TDC) program have an appreciable impact on regional goals to preserve open space outside the urban centers?

9

Housing

The background data is well presented and provides a clear understanding of the current housing situation. While the Commission basically agrees with the notion of concentrating housing and jobs in the downtown area, **the Final EIS should provide a thorough assessment of the implications of various alternatives for neighborhoods such as Pioneer Square, the International District and Belltown, some of which are below their housing targets. This should include meeting overall housing targets and for meeting housing affordability goals.**

10

The Final EIS should also assess the likelihood that housing will be built in the DOC 1 and 2 areas, versus all commercial development – and the implications of these various scenarios. The point here is to go beyond what the zoning might be to assess the likelihood of achieving the intended goals of getting both residential and commercial development in the DOC 1 and 2 areas.

11

The Final EIS should also carefully assess the alternatives' impact on existing subsidized housing and on the future ability to maintain a balance of housing types (i.e. serving different income levels; attracting different types of households) as is sought in downtown neighborhood plans as well as the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the resources leveraged through the Downtown Bonus program should show a range, rather than what will be available if all sites re fully developed (Table 19).

12

Finally the Final EIS should provide a more specific analysis of how smaller scale housing in Belltown is affected (or not) by larger scale residential and commercial development, particularly along the boundaries between these areas.

13

Land Use

Overall the section is thorough in its description of existing conditions and of the various alternatives. As noted in the overview statements, these alternatives do not seem to reflect the Mayor's recently stated goal of taller, thinner buildings that would provide visual open space in this very dense part of the city.

14

The DEIS does not do an adequate job of identifying and considering the impacts of the alternatives on historic buildings. It also understates the number of buildings that are eligible for City landmark designation. **The Final EIS should provide a amore detailed analysis, drawing on previous studies such as the Metro Tunnel EIS for buildings on Third Avenue, Allied Arts' Terra Cotta Building inventory, Historic Seattle's inventory of historically significant buildings, and the recent Monorail DEIS. It should also document which of these buildings provide affordable housing, a fact which is not reflected in the DEIS.**

15

The Final EIS should more thoroughly address potential effects of high density development (with higher heights, and more bulky structures) directly adjacent to lower scale mixed-use areas such as the Pike Market and Belltown. This section should also include an analysis of the impact on land costs and parking created by these alternatives. Finally, maps of the alternatives should show mixed use/residential development in adjacent areas to provide a more accurate context (e.g. development along Western Avenue in Belltown).

16

In general the Commission supports the use of transition zones and urges that these be provided between intensive commercial/retail uses and residential and related uses in the preferred alternative(s). **The Final EIS should examine the alternatives regarding how these transitions are handled.**

17

Height, Bulk and Scale

Greater height and density can be a good thing, since it helps the City achieve its urban village strategy as well as City Comprehensive Plan and regional growth management goals to concentrate housing and employment in key urban centers. However, it needs to be done in a way that produces the intended results of livable communities.

The Final EIS should describe how the various alternatives would achieve residential areas that create a desirable street environment, which is influenced by street width and block lengths as well as height, bulk and scale of the buildings. This issue merits particular scrutiny in the Denny Triangle area where key streets are fairly narrow and blocks are longer than in other areas of downtown. The impacts on light and shadow and the sense of enclosure and how they affect a potential residential environment should be considered. As noted elsewhere, alley vacations should also be considered for their impact on the scale of development and the resulting street environment.

18

Design flexibility is critical to successfully creating an overall street environment that is attractive and accommodates residential as well as office/commercial uses. For example, changes in the land use code need to be intentional in the relationship between height, bulk, and scale to preclude unintended negative impacts on existing uses or creating an uninviting environment, particularly in areas where a residential environment is intended. Design guidelines, particularly for the Denny Triangle neighborhood, could be helpful in dealing with these issues.

As noted in the general comments, the graphics do not show clearly the differences among the alternatives regarding height, bulk and scale. **The Final EIS should include illustrations showing different perspectives including street level views, views along major corridors, and perspectives from nearby view points.**

19

Pedestrian Amenities and Streetscape

Particularly in dense urban settings, the streetscape is often the primary pedestrian amenity and has a significant influence in creating a "pedestrian friendly" environment. Alley vacations are an issue and have an impact, particularly in residential areas and for pedestrian environment. **The Final EIS should include a more detailed discussion of the impact of alley vacations in these areas.**

20

In calling for more housing and employment density, the proposed changes in the Land Use Policies the DEIS should address the public benefit that should be derived from increasing the allowable height and density. This should include, at a minimum, creating a healthy and attractive pedestrian streetscape environment, providing community centers, schools, and other public and private services that are typical of urban centers. The Commission notes that the Denny Triangle is an area where the pedestrian environment will be shaped significantly by future development. This calls for clear guidance for development and how it can help create this pedestrian environment. **The Final EIS should contain a discussion of tools that might be explored to leverage resources to provide these services and amenities with the development as it is occurring.**

21

Parks and Open Space

The Planning Commission has long held the position that the City needs to commit to providing more parks and open space in the downtown area as the residential population increases. If the City really wants livable residential communities, open space must be treated as more than making the streets attractive. Particularly if the City does decide to double the target for the downtown residential population, it must make a serious commitment to adding open space for what would become the region's densest urban center. This should be considered as part of the public benefits that must be achieved with increased density and development.

The DEIS alternatives do not adequately address open space demands and needs of the projected residential population that would be permitted under these scenarios. While it does acknowledge that current and project open space will not meet the projected needs, it fails to identify in detail reasonable open space needs. If families are encouraged to live downtown, then recreational facilities and active open spaces will be needed to serve children.

22

In the Final EIS this section should be expanded to identify and assess more innovative and creative ways of providing open space and of mitigating open space impacts that would (or might) result from the various alternatives. This should include a more detailed analysis of the types of open space, parks and recreational facilities that are needed if more families live downtown and how these needs could be met through existing and new resources.

Finally, the DEIS does not analyze the effect of eliminating or reducing use of the TDC in providing resources for open space in the region as well as part of TDC developments. **The Final EIS should address this more explicitly.**

23

Views and Aesthetics

Views and visual aesthetics are important issues in downtown Seattle, with designated view corridors as well as many opportunities for glimpses of both near and distant vistas. **The Final EIS should include a**

24

more detailed analysis of the notion of visual open space (e.g. through taller, slimmer buildings) and ways to get more effective use of both public and private open space associated with developments. This will be critical to successfully achieving a livable residential environment in the downtown area.

24

Energy

The DEIS states that a new substation serving downtown needs to be energized by 2012, in order to provide for a service need date of 2015. The realistic likelihood of that happening in anticipation of future growth needs to be assessed (versus being built in response to actual development demand). The DEIS also references a new capacity plan to be prepared by the end of 2004 – how this will be incorporated into the Final EIS should be addressed.

25

The Final EIS needs to provide a more detailed assessment of infrastructure issues that result from these changes to more development capacity. What additional upgrades would be necessary or likely? This should include impacts on water and sewer system, both of which are aging systems in much of downtown and adjacent old neighborhoods. This assessment also needs to address funding to meet these needs.

26

Transportation

The Final EIS needs to address the implications of adding significant residential population to the downtown core, with a specific focus on assumptions about auto ownership and travel behavior of both future residents and workers (including the rationale for such assumptions).

27

The Final EIS should also address the potential impacts on local transportation of alley vacations in the Denny Triangle area and other areas where significant development is anticipated, within the context of projected traffic increases due to the increased residential and employment populations.

28

Parking

The DEIS does a good job of describing current conditions, projected changes in supply and demand. The underlying assumption is that given this is the downtown core, the goal is to reduce demand for commuter parking, rather than trying to meet potential demand. Impact mitigation is described in less detail, but does seem to cover the range of strategies for reducing demand and allowing the market to address adding to the supply of parking.

29

What is not addressed is the physical design and street environment impacts of structured parking, particularly if it is not screened at street level. **The Final EIS should address the impacts of above grade parking, particularly at the ground-floor level. Consideration should be given to requiring all such structures to have street-front retail/commercial uses.**

Concluding Comments

We urge you to address these issues and concerns in the Final EIS, and to expand it as necessary to more clearly articulate and address the implications of the Mayor's proposal for even more density. We also

30

Seattle Planning Commission

03/01/04

Page 7

encourage you to more explicitly address in the Final EIS how this more limited focus on height and density fits into the larger Center City focus as it takes shape.

The Planning Commission looks forward to continuing to work with DPD and the community in moving forward with alternatives that find the appropriate balance between the important goals of concentrating density in our center city and ensuring that this area is a safe, attractive and exciting place to live and work. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or wish to further discuss our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Owen". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "J" and "O".

John Owen
Chair

CC:

Diane Sugimura, DPD

John Rahaim, DPD

30

Belltown Housing and Land Use Subcommittee

January 13, 2004

Gordon Clowers
Department of Planning and Development
City of Seattle
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104

Subject: Downtown Height and Density Study

Dear Mr. Clowers:

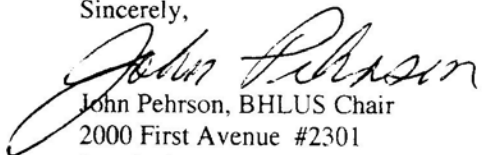
I am writing on behalf of the Belltown Housing and Land Use Subcommittee (BHLUS) of the Belltown Community Council on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the subject study. We took a position on this study in our letter dated 2/11/02 to Mary Jean Ryan (which is attached) and want to reiterate that position now.

The bulk and scale allowable for residential use by the DMC-240 zoning in south Belltown is a great concern to us. Changing that to DMR/C-240 as proposed in Alternative #3 is consistent with the rest of Belltown and is recommended. Further, we believe that the zoning restrictions of DMR/C-240 that result in a "wedding cake" design are overly constraining. We would welcome more latitude for the building architects and the design review board, while maintaining limits on upper level bulk and scale, and would be pleased to work with you on these matters.

As outlined in the reference letter, we would oppose vigorously the application of the Alternative #1 to south Belltown. This alternative increases the allowable bulk and scale of residential developments that is totally out of keeping with our neighborhood. The changes for south Belltown in Alternative #1 were not requested by our Belltown Neighborhood Plan or the plan of the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group.

We have appreciated the opportunity to work with you and Dennis Meier on these issues over the past 2 years. You have been very helpful and responsive to our questions.

Sincerely,



John Pehrson, BHLUS Chair
2000 First Avenue #2301
Seattle, WA 98121
206-441-9913
pehrsonj@halcyon.com

cc: Honorable Greg Nickels, Mayor, City of Seattle
Honorable Jan Drago, President, Seattle City Council
Honorable Peter Steinbrueck, Chair of Land Use and Planning Committee
Diane Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development
John Rahaim, Director of Planning
Dennis Meier, Department of Planning and Development

Jhp 1/10/04

Belltown Housing and Land Use Subcommittee

c/o John Lombard, Chair
2415 Second Avenue, #733
Seattle, WA 98121

February 11, 2002

Ms. Mary Jean Ryan
Director, Strategic Planning Office
City of Seattle
600 Fourth Avenue, Room 300
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Phase II Amendments to Downtown Development Regulations

Dear Ms. Ryan:

On behalf of the Belltown Community Council and its Housing and Land Use Subcommittee, I am writing to communicate our unanimous recommendations on the second phase of amendments to development regulations for downtown.

We support changing the Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zone in the southeast portion of Belltown To Downtown Mixed Residential/Commercial (DMR/C), as proposed in Alternative 3 ("Residential Emphasis") in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed amendments. We would like the city to explore extending this proposed change to all of the DMC zone in this part of Belltown. (Alternative 3 would apply it from Virginia to Lenora from 1st to 3rd Avenues, and between Virginia and Blanchard on 4th and 5th Avenues. The extension we propose would also include 2nd Avenue and the east side of 1st Avenue from Virginia to Stewart.)

This action would decrease the maximum floor-to-area ratio (FAR) for commercial development from seven to five in this part of the DMC zone. Even more important, it would reduce the physical bulk of residential developments there--lot coverage would be restricted by progressively greater amounts at heights of 65, 85, 125 and 240 feet. Successful high-density residential neighborhoods need access to light and space, which are lost when high-rise buildings are allowed to cover entire lots with no setbacks or variation, as can be seen in recent developments along Western Avenue. Without the DMR/C zoning, new residential developments could build to the maximum allowable height in southeastern Belltown with only limited restrictions on bulk, since residential use is not subject to the FAR limit. In addition to restricting lot coverage, we believe the city should explore creating incentives for more slender residential high-rises downtown, perhaps similar to those it recently established for commercial buildings.

We strongly oppose the change that is proposed in Alternative 1 in the DEIS ("High End Height and Density Increases") for this same part of the DMC zone in southeastern Belltown. This alternative would increase the maximum floor-to-area ratio for commercial development from seven to ten and the maximum height of developments

from 240 to 312 feet in this zone. This proposal is contrary to the goal of the city, the Belltown Community Council and the Belltown Neighborhood Plan to make Belltown an attractive location for the greatest concentration of residents in Seattle. It would exaggerate the problems with the existing DMC zone described above. It was not proposed by the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group or any other citizen body. It was included by city staff in Alternative 1 in the DEIS to test the impacts of maximum increases in height and density across all of the zones that might have changes proposed in the second phase of amendments to the downtown development regulations. We would fight any such proposed change for Belltown.

2

We recognize that there are potential advantages to increasing the allowable height and density of developments in the downtown core and parts of the Denny Triangle, particularly as a means of increasing incentives to support affordable housing, open space and landmark preservation in the downtown area. We support that goal. Our comments are targeted only to the part of the proposed amendments that would apply within the boundaries of Belltown, as defined in our neighborhood plan.

3

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DEIS. We would especially like to thank Dennis Meier of your office for attending two meetings of the Belltown Housing and Land Use Subcommittee (BHLUS) to discuss the alternatives in the DEIS and how they might affect Belltown. Dennis was consistently helpful, fair and professional in all of his interactions with us. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact John Lombard, at (206) 256-1508 or jlombard2415@earthlink.net, through February, or John Pehrson, at (206) 441-9913 or pehrsonj@halcyon.com, after February.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

John Lombard
Chair, BHLUS

Members:

Joan Algarin	Valerie Heide Mudra
Karen Anderson-Bittenbender	Sarah Lewontin
Mark Baerwaldt	Jerry Jordheim
Zander Batchelder	John Pehrson
Dick Cleveland	Barbara Sheldon
Julia Decruz	Blaine Weber
Sylvia Fisher	Hal Weeks
Carolyn Geise	

cc: Honorable Greg Nickels, Mayor, City of Seattle
Honorable Peter Steinbruck, Chair, Seattle City Council
Honorable Judy Nicasio, Chair, Land Use Committee
Honorable Nick Licata, Chair, Neighborhoods, Arts and Civil Rights Committee
Honorable Richard McIver, Chair, Housing, Human Services and Community Development Committee

DENNY TRIANGLE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

February 27, 2004

Ms. Diane Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning & Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN
CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE

FEB 27 2004

RECEIVED

Re: Downtown Height and Density Draft EIS

Dear Ms. Sugimura:

We are writing to provide general comments on the Downtown Height and Density Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS").

As you are probably aware, the Denny Triangle Plan was completed in 1998 and approved by City Council in 1999. The Denny Triangle Neighborhood will help the City of Seattle achieve its growth targets, set at the time of planning, of 23,000 new jobs and 3,778 new housing units by 2014.

The Denny Triangle Plan's top priority is to change the zoning and bonus system to allow for significant increases of height and density. The Denny Triangle represents the largest developable area for office expansion in downtown Seattle and as such, the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone is intended to take the higher, taller office buildings and DMC zones are for commercial mixed-use buildings. Our goal is clearly stated. We seek to increase the commercial development capacity and attract commercial development to the Denny Triangle and leverage it to create moderate and low-moderate income level housing and open space.

The Denny Triangle Plan also calls for reducing or relaxing upper level setback requirements in order to avoid the proliferation of bulky "wedding cake" shaped buildings. The plan was carefully crafted and balanced so that employment expansion will be achieved while also creating the resources for affordable housing and open space. The increased height and density allows for better utilization of land so that City is assured of achieving all of its goals for jobs, housing and open space without risk of realizing just one of those goals at the expense of another.

1

The Denny Triangle has worked with the City in good faith and waited a long time for its plan to be implemented. In 2001, the downtown TDR and Bonus program was amended as "Phase One" of a 2-phased plan. Phase One included changing previously bonusable items to requirements and it was agreed that the cost of housing bonus and TDR would be raised from approximately \$13 to \$22 per buildable square foot. In exchange for these changes (increased costs to development), the City promised that the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group's (DUCPG's) Plan and Denny Triangle Plan to increase the height and density would be implemented as Phase 2. Unfortunately, in these interim couple of years, we not only missed the opportunities that come with a good, strong economic cycle but by having only the Phase One amendments to the Bonus & TDR provisions implemented, this has actually served as a material disincentive to development. **The Denny Triangle Plan needs to be implemented this year!**

2

The Final EIS should consider greater height and density. We recognize that the DEIS Alternative #1 was drafted as a composite plan. It doesn't clearly represent the Denny Triangle Plan and the DUCPG or downtown plan. Given that fact, and given the changes that have occurred in our City with the passage of time, the EIS should consider greater height and density. Current height and density restrictions unwisely restrict opportunities to guide the development where it is desired and restricts opportunities for additional housing and open space. The increased height limits will allow for office uses contemplated by the Comp Plan and bring about taller, thinner buildings. The Denny Triangle has always been intended to accommodate future employment growth and is envisioned to be a commercial district that includes residential. Increasing height and density promotes more efficient office buildings as well as mixed-use projects that could include combinations of uses such as office, residential, retail and open space. Additionally, the EIS needs to investigate greater height and density in order to make the best use of the investments in mass transit. None of the alternatives offer adequate density to support the new public transportation projects and this just doesn't make sense given the enormous investment being made on transportation.

3

The EIS should address changes to the current setback requirements. The Denny Triangle seeks changes that will allow for greater design flexibility as it relates to upper level setbacks. Current requirements add costs and result in bulky, "look-alike" buildings that aren't pedestrian friendly or in keeping with an exciting urban environment.

4

The Denny Triangle opposes Alternative #2 as this alternative runs counter to the Neighborhood's Plan and risks squandering the City's and Denny Triangle's ability to realize its potential to achieve future employment and housing goals.

5

The Denny Triangle strongly opposes Alternative #3. This alternative constitutes a downzone. This is diametrically opposed to The Denny Triangle Plan and the DUCPG Plan. The City cannot afford to lose the employment that comes with the commercial development potential in our neighborhood and the significant housing resources that are generated from the commercial development.

6

In summary, the Final EIS should honor the neighborhood plans and planning process. There has been and remains unprecedented consensus for implementing the increased height and density and other components as set forth in the Denny Triangle and DUCPG Plans. The height and density increases need to happen now so we are prepared for the next economic cycle. It is important to note that the Denny Triangle Neighborhood is on record as having stated its support of the TDC program as being conditional to implementing the Triangle's Plan. The TDC program has not been used and may never be used. The Denny Triangle Neighborhood's support was strictly subject to that program not preventing, interfering or delaying, in any way, with the implementation of the Denny Triangle's plan for increasing height and density. We want the existing TDC Plan eliminated and the Denny Triangle Plan implemented.

7

The Denny Triangle embraces density and wants new jobs and affordable housing for downtown. Years of thoughtful, deliberate effort went into drafting the Plan and into making recommendations for bonuses and TDR's to ensure consistency with the Comp Plan and Growth Management Act. We actively participated in the collaborative planning efforts between the City, the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group, and the Advisory Committee and have remained faithful stewards of the Triangle and DUCPG Plans. We ask the City keep faith with the Neighborhood Plans and to be bold and innovative in considering how best to increase the height and density in Downtown without being limited to what has been identified in Alternative #1 in the DEIS.

8

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dana Bollinger, President
Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association

Cc: Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association Board of Directors



Mission Statement:
To champion a healthy, vibrant urban core.

OFFICERS

Mike Flynn
Chair
Carla Murray
First Vice Chair
Mark Houtchens
Vice Chair
James G. Young
Secretary/Treasurer
Kate Joncas
President
John C. McCullough
General Counsel

Downtown Seattle Association

January 29, 2004

Diane Sugimura, Director
City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, 98104

RECEIVED
FEB 02 2004

Dept. of Design
Construction & Land Use

Dear Ms. Sugimura,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Downtown Height and Density Study, Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

In general, we do not feel that the DEIS options went far enough to meet the neighborhoods' vision for high quality, dense, urban Downtown neighborhoods. In particular, since completing the Downtown Urban Center Plan in 1998, there have been significant changes in Downtown and the economy. The neighborhoods and community have been discussing new ideas and goals, with a bigger vision for the Center City. This vision was expressed at the "Thinking Boldly About the Future" Forum sponsored by the Mayor in November. We are concerned that because this DEIS is responding to 1998 conditions, it will become an obstacle to achieving our goals for our neighborhoods.

One of the most interesting changes since 1998 is the growing emergence of the concept of the "urban center", a collection of unique urban neighborhoods that stretches from South Lake Union to South Downtown. Recently we have seen projects in South Lake Union start construction, and the development of innovative new ideas for South Downtown. In addition, many developers and policy makers are examining Vancouver B.C.'s development policies to see what we might apply here in Seattle.

Probably the biggest change is the billions of dollars in new transportation investments for Downtown, including light rail, heavy rail, streetcar, monorail and the Viaduct. To take full advantage of these investments, we need to develop a new and bigger vision for the growth of Downtown.

When the five Downtown neighborhoods collaborated in 1998 on the Downtown Urban Center Plan, we structured our plan to accommodate the estimated growth allocation numbers we received from the City. The growth allocations that were the basis for our plan were just that—allocations. They were based on regional growth we thought we might get, not on the growth we wanted to attract in order to keep Downtown a vibrant, urban place. At the time, we all discussed that we would like to see greater density than we

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chris Ackerley
Renee Behnke
Dorothy Bullitt
Patrick Callahan
Gary Carpenter
Randy S. Daniels
Daniel Edelman
Jerome R. Ernst
Anne Farrell
Mimi Gardner-Gates
Patrick Gordon
Joshua Green, III
George Griffin
Dick Hadley
Nicolas Hanauer
John W. Hanley, Jr.
Ada M. Healey
James D. Hebert
Mark Hewitt
Weldon E. Ihrig
Paul Ishii
William Justen
Alan Kurimura
Paige Miller
Jane Rakay Nelson
Denny P. Onslow
Pamela Pearson
Steve Pumphrey
Norman B. Rice
Jay Rockey
Rita Ryder
Robert Sexton
Greg Smith
Milton L. Smith
Dale Sperling
Richard Stevenson
Steve Trainer
Mark A. Weed
William M. Weisfield
Kathleen P. Wilcox, J.D.
Kathryn Williams
David Yuan

PAST CHAIRS

William Bain, Jr.
Gene B. Brandzel
Herbert M. Bridge
A. M. Clise
Joshua Green, III
Matt Griffin
Yogi Hutson
Stephen K. Koehler
Bill Lewis
Blake Nordstrom
Richard C. Redman
J. Michael Rona
H. Jon Runstad
Judith M. Runstad
Frederic S. Weiss

were required to accommodate by the City in some neighborhoods, particularly Denny Triangle.

Our vision for Downtown was to be more like Vancouver, which is now home to 100,000 residents, compared to our current 20,000. We also viewed Downtown as a growing center for employment, which supports growth management goals and protects Seattle neighborhoods from unwanted and inappropriate commercial development.

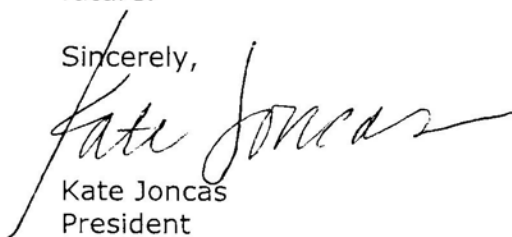
The neighborhoods and DSA still strongly support the original Downtown Urban Center Plan priorities for housing (particularly affordable housing) and job growth. We still strongly believe that regional job growth should be focused in Downtown to reduce sprawl. The reality is that Downtown will always be more expensive to develop than a green field, so if we want the development, we will have to be proactive and offer incentives, as envisioned in the plan.

Finally, given all the recent positive community discussion about density, it is very concerning to see high-density development in the DEIS equated to a poor quality pedestrian environment. Some of the best pedestrian environments in the world are in dense urban areas, and this is the vision the DUCPG group had when making its plan. In addition, the so-called "maximum growth" option is labeled as the worst-case scenario—yes, this is the technical term, but used in this context implies that growth is bad.

We propose that the City consider a two-pronged approach to moving forward. It is clear that new options to encourage appropriate growth are needed, and that development of some of these options is beyond the scope of this DEIS. DSA would like to partner with the City to explore some new ideas.

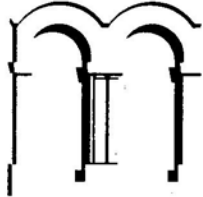
Second, we encourage City staff to be creative; to see what we can do within the framework of the options identified in this DEIS to increase height and density in Downtown beyond what is currently identified. The neighborhoods are anxious to develop new tools to help us move into the future.

Sincerely,



Kate Joncas
President

HISTORIC SEATTLE



DEDICATED TO
ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION

PRESERVATION DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

JAMES FEARN, CHAIR

STEVE ARAI

KEVIN DANIELS

JIM DIERS

ANDREA DIVOKY

MICHAEL HERSCHENSOHN

LARRY JOHNSON

MARY MCCUMBER

PETER MILLS

RICK SEVER

PATTY WHISLER

JOHN CHANEY, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

HISTORIC SEATTLE FOUNDATION

MICHAEL HERSCHENSOHN
CHAIR

STEVE ARAI

JOHN CHANEY

JAMES FEARN

GARY GAFFNER

MARIE STRONG

PAMELA ZYTNIICKI

February 26, 2004

Gordon Clowers
Department of Planning and Development
700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104-5070

RE: DEIS on Height and Density Changes in Downtown Seattle

by facsimile and mail

Dear Mr. Clowers,

Historic Seattle, chartered by the City of Seattle in 1974 to preserve our city's built heritage, wishes to provide comments on the draft environmental impact statement addressing potential height and density changes downtown generated by your office.

While Historic Seattle, and the preservation community nationwide, have embraced increased urban density as an antidote to sprawl and a number of other highly significant issues, we are concerned that this investigation of impacts be as thorough as possible. We ask that the historic resources potentially impacted by alterations in current zoning are properly recognized within your investigation.

The current list of potential landmarks should be expanded to include information gathered through the environmental impact study process generated by a number of projects downtown. Historic Seattle volunteers and staff have assembled the attached list of potentially eligible landmark buildings and districts mentioned in EIS documents. Please add these to the list of potentially eligible properties within the commercial core, Belltown, and the Denny Triangle area already mentioned in your document.

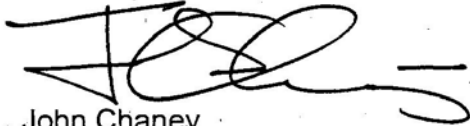
Also, raising height and density limits downtown will, of course, place even more pressure on owners of landmark and potential landmark buildings to maximize the economic opportunities of the site through demolition and new construction. While this is already a threat in most any part of Seattle where the zoning envelop exceeds the height and density of existing older structures, the economic benefits of teardowns are highest within your study area.

Incentives to offset the gap between rehabilitation projects and new construction need to work especially well within this zone. As a part of the mitigation for changes in zoning downtown that intensify existing pressure to demolish, the Transfer of Development Rights program, which was altered in 2001, should better provide funding for rehabilitation projects. The current percentage of TDR funds (no more than 25% of credits generated through this program) may be inadequate to offset impacts.

2

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this study, and as always, are open and willing to contribute to any discussion related to our historic built environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Chaney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Chaney
Executive Director

**Additional downtown area buildings that are potentially significant and are not
City of Seattle Landmarks**

Baillaergeon	1200 Second Avenue	
Catholic Seamen's Club	2330 First Avenue	
Centennial Building	1900 Fourth Avenue	
Central Building	810 Third Avenue	
Chamber of Commerce	215 Columbia Street	
Compton Lumber	2315 Western Avenue	
Davenport Apartments	420 Vine Street	
Devonshire Apartments	420 Wall Street	
Diller Hotel/Porter-Davis	1220 First Avenue	
Fifth Avenue Court	2132 Fifth Avenue	
Foster and Marshall	720 Second Avenue	
IBM Building	1200 Fifth Avenue	
Labor Temple	2800 First Avenue	
Lexington-concord Apts.	2402 Second Avenue	
Lewiston Hotel	2205 First Avenue	
Lyon Building	607 Third Avenue	(NRHP listed)
Maritime Building	911 Western Avenue	
Mayflower Park	405 Olive Way	
Medical Dental Building	509 Olive Way	
MGM/Blu Canary	2331 Second Avenue	
Norton Building	801 Second Avenue	
Old Spaghetti Factory	2800 Elliott Avenue	
Pacific Lincoln-Mercury	601 Westlake Avenue North	
Pacific Telephone & Telegraph		

Pathe	2325 3rd Avenue
Rainier Tower	1301 Fifth Avenue
Rivoli Apts.	2127 Second Avenue
Roq la Rue Gallery	2312 Second Avenue
Scargo	2205 First Avenue
Seattle Trust	804 Second Avenue
Second & Pike Building	
Securities Building	1904 Third Avenue
Skyway Luggage	2501 Elliott Avenue
Terminal Sales Annex	1931 Second Ave
Two Bells Tavern	2315 Fourth Avenue
Union Livery Stable	2200 Western Avenue
University Women's Club	1105 Sixth Avenue
Vance Building	1402 Third Avenue
William Tell Hotel	2327 Second Avenue
Woolworth's	1418 Third Avenue
YWCA	1201 Third Avenue

Numerous hotels and apartment buildings, especially in Belltown.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SEATTLE

Statement for the Public Hearing February 24, 2004, on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Downtown Height and Density Changes published by the City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development November 2003

The League of Women Voters of Seattle has studied and acted on downtown land use issues for over 20 years. We were actively involved in the development of the Downtown Plan adopted in 1985 and in the City's 1994 Comprehensive Plan. We continue to follow the City's land use plans and regulations with an eye to preserving and enhancing our vision of a most livable city. We offer the following comments on the Downtown Height and Density Changes Draft EIS prepared by the Department of Planning and Development:

Relationship of Proposed Changes to the Growth Management Act and City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan

The League of Women Voters of Seattle acknowledges and endorses the state and city goals of directing growth to urban areas, reducing sprawl, and accommodating increased density of commercial and residential buildings in the study area of downtown Seattle. We learn from the DEIS that current zoning—Alternative 4—is adequate to accommodate the employment and residential growth projected through the year 2014 under the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1994. We question whether substantial changes in zoning, such as those proposed in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, should be undertaken before the Comprehensive Plan is thoroughly reviewed and updated to address the following 20 years from 2014 through 2034.

Major changes are underway in areas close to the study area such as the waterfront, port properties in North Bay, the SODO area, South Lake Union and the East Pine/Pike and Madison areas. A broader look at the entire downtown and the nearby areas cited above should be undertaken as part of the required, once-a-decade review of the City Comprehensive Plan. These other areas could provide opportunities for residential growth, including affordable housing. Their residents could work downtown, provided that good public transportation is available.

Major transportation projects like the Viaduct/Waterfront plan, the monorail, and the bus tunnel closure for light rail should be reviewed for their impacts on the study area, and all of downtown, before substantial changes are made in downtown zoning.

Changes Recommended by Downtown Neighborhood Plans

Many of the changes in zoning, height limits and bonuses recommended by downtown neighborhood plans have already been addressed by the City and were adopted in 1999 and in 2001. It may be premature to change the rules substantially again before we know how the recent changes are working. We question the elimination of the Transfer of Development Credits program under Alternative 1. This program has the potential to

encourage residential development and provide funds for amenities in the Denny Triangle.

2

Areas Needing More Thorough Analysis of Impacts and Possible Mitigation Strategies in the Final EIS:

Housing

The League supports the goal of increasing the amount of housing in the study area. Table 25, "Downtown Development Scenario 2000-2020," projects the number of potential residential units under each alternative. We see that the totals for all four alternatives are quite similar, ranging from 7,315 under Alternative 4 (no action) to 7,640 under Alternative 2. We question the tradeoff of a few more residential units for the substantial increases in height and density proposed in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3.

3

We urge that the Final EIS include a more thorough review of the possible mitigation strategies listed on page 3-28, because we recognize that the challenge of finding funding for low-income and affordable housing in the study area will be great under all four of the alternatives. Current incentives fall short of meeting the real financial costs of creating low-income and affordable housing downtown. More attention should be given to meeting the housing and service needs of families with children who do or might live downtown.

4

The rezone proposed in Alternative 3 to DMR/C for a Residential Mixed Use Area with reductions in FAR looks promising and should be reviewed more intensively in the Final EIS. We support some clustering of residential uses in order to provide more of a feeling of living in a neighborhood. In addition, we propose that the Final EIS include a review of a new provision for limiting the density of residential buildings in the study area

5

Height, Bulk and Scale

The Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies for the Downtown place a special emphasis on the quality of the pedestrian environment. The increases in height and bulk proposed in Alternatives 1 and 2 (and in Alternative 3 for the Commercial Core) would negatively affect the pedestrian experience with taller, bulkier buildings towering over the narrow streets and sidewalks in the study area. The Final EIS should more thoroughly review these negative impacts. Do the tradeoffs of increased space for jobs and housing outweigh the negative impacts on the pedestrian experience, on aesthetics and ultimately on the livability of the city?

6

The League supports zoning and policies included in the 1985 Downtown plan that require a smooth transition in scale and density of development from areas of greatest height and density to areas of lower height and density. Alternative 1 includes unacceptably abrupt increases in height, bulk and scale along the edges of sensitive transition areas.

7

Open Space and Parks

This Draft EIS exposes the current and future inadequacies in the amount of open space and parks available to residents and employees in the study area under all of the

8

alternatives. The Final EIS should explore the "other possible mitigation strategies" outlined on page 3-125. Since the likelihood of adding major open space in the study area in the foreseeable future seems remote, attention should be given to improving the pedestrian connections between downtown and nearby major open spaces, such as the waterfront, the Seattle Center and South Lake Union. Increasing height and density without significantly addressing the already inadequate amount of open space in the study area is not acceptable.

8

Thank you for this opportunity to present the comments of the League of Women Voters of Seattle.

Presented by Nancy Bagley
Past President



February 26, 2004

Dennis Meier
Seattle Department of Planning and Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104-5070

RE: Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS

To Dennis Meier:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Downtown Height and Density Changes Draft Environmental Impact Statement, dated November 2003. Following are our specific comments:

1. While we support the idea of concentrating growth in the core of the city to reduce sprawl, traffic congestion and other negative environmental impacts, we strongly feel that new development in downtown must result in an increase rather than a reduction of open space, especially green space. We applaud the city's effort to follow the Vancouver, B.C. model of creating a livable, walkable and dense downtown but note that only half of the equation is implemented by the DEIS alternatives. Open space for public enjoyment and livability is integral to the success of Vancouver and will be equally important for Seattle. Even more crucial is green space. Green space will improve the downtown habitat base (terrestrial insects, birds, etc.), cleanse and reduce stormwater flows to the existing Combine Sewer System, as well as provide clean flows to Elliott Bay from surface water runoff and reduce the heat island effect in the concrete built environment. The city should include incentives or requirements for green roofs, green infiltration strips around buildings, as well as porous pavement, and "leaky stormdrains." Instead of reducing open space as a result of zoning changes, the City must ensure a significant increase in open and green space.

2. Open space calculations for residents in downtown, in the DEIS, are based on "thousands of households." We feel that the calculation should instead be based on "thousands of residents," which would put the standard inline with open space and parkland targets for other cities. If the downtown open spaces are calculated on a "per 1000 residents" basis, the City is seriously lacking in public open space under current conditions. Further, if the population of downtown doubles in the next 20 years from 33,000 to 66,000, then open space, and especially green space must also double, at a minimum.

MAIN OFFICE

911 Western Avenue, Suite 580
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 382-7007
fax (206) 382-7006
people@pugetsound.org

NORTH SOUND

407 Main Street, Suite 201
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 336-1931
fax (360) 336-5422
northsound@pugetsound.org

SOUTH SOUND

1063 Capitol Way South, Suite 206
Olympia, WA 98501
(360) 754-9177
fax (360) 534-9371
southsound@pugetsound.org

3. The DEIS does not adequately address stormwater treatment as part of the rezoning strategy. Existing stormwater regulations encourage reduction of flows to the stormdrain system in order to prevent combined sewer overflows into Elliott Bay. We encourage much more emphasis on on-site retention and treatment of stormwater, through the use of green roofs, infiltration strips, porous pavement, reuse and other methods. If buildings are allowed to become even bulkier and larger in scale, and local populations are increased, then provision needs to be made (as part of this EIS process) to reduce the environmental impacts of contaminated stormwater from these densely populated urban areas. West Point and other treatment facilities do not adequately treat toxins in stormwater – infiltration and other engineered solutions on-site will.

We need more open space and green space for our residents and for the health of Elliott Bay and Lake Union.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (206) 382-7007 X215. Thank you for your consideration of our comments in the EIS process.

Sincerely,



Heather Trim
Elliott Bay Project Coordinator

January 30, 2004

1000 Friends of Washington
1617 Boylston Avenue, Suite
200
Seattle, WA 98122
206) 343-0681 phone
206) 300-8218 fax

Dave Russell
President

Board of Trustees

Fran Abel

Langley

Dia Armenta

Bainbridge Island

Jay Arnold

Kirkland

Nancy Ball

Walla Walla

Margot Blacker

Bellevue

David Bricklin

Bainbridge Island

Vance Corum

Vancouver

Jeff Eustis

Seattle

Ray Gould

Edmonds

Bart Haggin

Spokane

Bruce Lorig

Mercer Island

Mary McCumber

Seattle

Henry McGee

Seattle

Barbara McIntosh

Poulsbo

Bill Ross

Seattle

Dave Russell

Kirkland

Will Stelle

Seattle

Margaret Studer

Anacortes

Nancy Tosta

Burien

Jodie Vice

Seattle

Daryl Williams

Tulalip Tribe

Advisory Board

James Ellis

Dick Ford

Virginia Gunby

Joe King

Lucy Steers

Ms. Diane Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning and Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms Sugimura:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the City of Seattle's Downtown Height and Density Changes Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). We applaud the city for the time and energy that have gone into development of this analysis. The Growth Management Act (GMA) encourages residential and employment growth in urban areas, and we feel that increasing heights and densities in downtown Seattle could assist that goal. We especially support:

- The level of detailed analysis that went into this DEIS. We applaud you for the thoroughness of this work, identifying potential impacts as well as mitigation strategies. The development of four alternatives and the detailed comparison between them is very useful in understanding the complexity of the issues involved.
- The development of mitigation strategies in this DEIS provides a range of ways to decrease potential impacts of this proposed increase in development. These strategies are well thought out and will be essential to maintaining the existing character of downtown Seattle in spite of increased development.
- The forward thinking of this development proposal to allow increased development in downtown Seattle. The GMA encourages development in urban areas that provides a mix of housing for all income levels, adequate transportation and economic development consistent with planning. This DEIS has done an exemplary job of examining the potential benefits and impacts of each alternative on housing, transportation and land use.

As you move forward with this process and select a preferred alternative, we have a few concerns that we encourage you to consider. Our concerns are as follows.

- The DEIS is fairly clear about the potential loss of affordable housing stock and potential loss of opportunity to build additional affordable housing. We urge you to ensure the preservation of existing affordable housing and implement zoning, financing tools and other incentives to provide additional affordable housing for all income levels in downtown Seattle.
- We encourage you to select an alternative that provides for a substantial residential element in the downtown area. A mix of housing and employment is important to provide for a vibrant and mixed-use center that will continue to make Seattle a wonderful city. Maintaining existing residential character is

essential, and the use of rezones to promote residential uses in some locations could be beneficial as mitigation to the proposed increases in commercial bulk.

- We encourage the implementation of design standards that will ensure pedestrian amenities and pedestrian-scale design to help mitigate the increase in bulk and scale of development in downtown Seattle. As an example of this issue, the DEIS identifies minimal development standards for the enhancement of pedestrian amenities in the Denny area as a potential problem that could lead to the development of a primarily commercial district.
- The DEIS identifies traffic as a problem in the study area that will increase with more intense development. We encourage the implementation of transportation mitigation strategies in conjunction with new development to reduce the impacts. We applaud the development of detailed transportation demand management strategies as part of the DEIS and encourage their implementation. Providing for more housing downtown will help mitigate the additional traffic.
- The potential loss of some parking has been identified as an impact of all of the alternatives. We support the mitigation strategy to reduce the minimum and maximum parking requirement in the study area. This tactic would allow demand to create the necessary amount of parking rather than providing unnecessary supply and would encourage the use of transit and carpooling.
- All of the alternatives, including the do nothing alternative, identify the amount of open space as inadequate with the goals of the GMA. We encourage the implementation of a requirement that developers provide public open space, which could be in the form of a pocket park, atrium or rooftop garden, among other alternatives. Intense development is most likely the best use of land in the study area, but open space can exist in unusual forms and even within buildings.

Thanks to the city staff for all of your hard work on this proposal. We support moving forward with the process of identifying a preferred alternative for the proposed change in height and density limits for downtown Seattle. We encourage the balancing of residential and employment growth in the city, as it currently is the largest employment center but also consists of many important residential centers as well. We believe that adoption of the increased height and density limits, with the right mitigation strategies, will provide for positive, well-planned growth in Seattle and the region.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sydney McComas or Tim Trohimovich both at (206)343-0681 or e-mail: sydney@1000friends.org or tim@1000friends.org.

Sincerely,

Sydney McComas
Urban Policy Advocate

Gordon Clowers - Downtown EIS

From: "Michael Baker" <michael@bobcanhelp.com>
 To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
 Date: 2/25/2004 4:31 PM
 Subject: Downtown EIS

Hello Gordon,

I was at the public review meeting last night, Feb. 24, and after reflecting on the process, I wanted to pass along a few observations.

I occasionally attend these kinds of meetings because of a professional interest in business and sustainability, though I do live in Seattle, also, and am invested in its growth as a resident.

My experience with the city meetings I've been to, as meetings, has been mixed. I'm glad to see that the city is reaching out to involve citizens in its process, but in general the presentations suffer from a lack of clarity, in scope and in goals. Generally, the public is promised that their "input" will be weighed, but the weighing mechanism is rarely in view. Further work on defining the scope of a meeting, and the specific goals of the meeting itself (rather than that of the whole process), would be helpful.

To take last night as an example: I arrived about 15 minutes late, and apparently I missed the primer presentation on the jargon that would be used throughout by various speakers. I know many of the people there were, of course, familiar with FAR ratios and their relationship to building height, but I was not. I had to go back and study up, which I'm happy to do. It's just a point of courtesy, generally, not to speak publicly in acronyms.

To begin from the beginning, there was a booster intro from a real estate professional, and then Diane quoted the Mayor at some length, and then the discussion began in earnest. The speaker largely referred, in illustrating the difference between alternatives, to maps on foam core that were useless to anyone more than 10 ft. away. I gathered that our discussion was going to revolve around two factors: FAR numbers and height increases. At no point were these numbers placed in context, so that the listener could visualize the relative baselines of density/height (though Portland and Vancouver were frequently cited as examples, numbers weren't connected to either). Further, increases in height were not linked, for clarity, to mention of the existing height limits.

Context is terribly important in communicating meaningfully. As we were being asked for input on these two factors, specifically, I was wondering what the baselines are. I mean, apparently these are the primary drivers in managing growth. What are the extremes, for example, of height/density? What is clearly an option to shy away from: You don't want to look like Hong Kong, do you? What height/density ratios have come to signify a city of a certain size? What are the ratios for cities known for vibrant downtowns?

Also, some forms of communication just communicate better. A discussion of percentage-height-increase needs a visual model to illustrate the change in the skyline from a few viewpoints.

At the point that I left, the speaker had just asked us whether we preferred mixed office/residential development or residential enclaves. Again, this seemed to lack context. I mean, I ***prefer*** to be wealthy and drive an electric Maserati. I'm no engineer, but it seemed to me that development of specific areas for specific purposes would require different support infrastructure that would weigh for or against the feasibility of a project. Building residential enclaves, for instance, would seem to offer economies of scale, and opportunities for clustering infrastructural support. However, I imagine that's open to debate, which I didn't hear any of.

It struck me as really very peculiar that the cost/benefit ratios to these decisions were not being overtly discussed, and from the relevant viewpoints. I welcome hearing what developers' think is feasible, in conjunction with the opinions of advocates for low income housing.

All I really heard were the usual representatives saying the usual things, based upon their interests, and not interacting meaningfully. The presenters, meanwhile, had little data, or meaningfully presented data, to offer us in distinguishing between Alternatives #1 - #4. After all, why stop at an extra 100' in height? Why not give Mr. Selig

1

2

credit for foresightedness and establish a 950' ceiling? Clearly there are parameters being set, but I was not informed of the reasons for these parameters. Do metropolitan residents demand more height? Do developers make that much more money? Is it simply a question of meeting limited geographic area?

2

In sustainability, we're asked to consider what we want, what the specific desired outcome is, and backcast from there. I don't get the sense that this EIS draft is about that. I certainly can't tell what the proposed changes are "for" in terms of a real, future downtown. It seems to want to be congruent with a notion of growth, but it doesn't seem to offer real opportunity to direct that growth. Some of my concerns are outside the scope (I think) of the draft, such as the ramifications of this kind of growth for the surrounding communities, or the question of why simply building tall residential towers is enough to convince people to live in them. Nothing I heard last night made me think anyone would move off the Issaquah plateau to live downtown.

3

Still, for an EIS, there seemed precious little said about the impact of growth in general on the environment, adjusted or otherwise. Again, I think a base rate should be established. It's not clear to me that Seattle can sustain the population it has, long-term, without environmental degradation in key areas.

4

I am for a vibrant downtown that doesn't close up at 5:30pm. I just arrived back in town after three years in San Francisco, which has that kind of density-driven lifestyle in spades. Of course, I can't help but note that San Francisco isn't over-fond of tall towers, bulky or slender, and certainly not for residential use. That's not why people move to San Francisco (and I'd think you could ask the same thing of why people move to Seattle).

Secondly, a good portion of the vibrancy has to do with a thriving network of support-service small businesses, such as restaurants, bars, and corner stores, which don't tend to "live" in towers' shiny first-floor retail spaces. The Palomino might; a local bistro doesn't.

5

Thirdly, I note that San Francisco's population density isn't a function of height increases. Obviously that results in the real estate costs we're all aware of. But again, what precisely is the cost/benefit ratio? What's optimal? People have not stopped moving to the Bay Area, after all. And we have yet to test our current tall buildings in our anticipated large earthquake.

To come back to the beginning, the key points here are scope and clarity. And context. For future meetings, I'd like to leave knowing succinct answers to these questions:

1) Why are we here today? What do we hope to accomplish by having this meeting? What are the means by which these goals will be accomplished?

2) What is the context of the process we're involved in? What is the stage of the process we're treating? What is our next step?

Thanks very much for this opportunity to respond,

MICHAEL BAKER

Gordon Clowers - City Height Limits

From: marshall_n_brown@hotmail.com
To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
Date: 11/12/2003 10:15 PM
Subject: City Height Limits

Please consider this a very firm opposition to any change to the greater Seattle downtown height limits, especially the Regrade, lower Q.A. and South Lake Union which would impugn or diminish the view of or from The Space Needle. The Needle IS Seattle in the World's eye, worth more in commerce than 100 skinny skyscrapers or condos, low income or not, or 100 city council members or mayors. Any who would change the Needle's "presence" should be tarred and feathered and ridden out of town!

Marshall N Brown
2961 36th Ave S
Seattle WA 98144

1

Gordon Clowers - Public Comment on Draft EIS for Downtown Height and Density Changes

From: "Jonathan Dubman" <jon@dubman.com>
To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
Date: 1/29/2004 1:50 AM
Subject: Public Comment on Draft EIS for Downtown Height and Density Changes

This Draft EIS is an thorough study of an important issue for the future of our city. I do not take issue with the analysis, but would like to make some general comments. Overall, I am encouraged by the discussion of easing the limits on building heights downtown and in other areas where appropriate. There are many lessons to be learned from the fantastic success of downtown Vancouver in the same 14 years since Seattle passed the outdated and counterproductive CAP Initiative.

While it is certainly possible to build a wonderfully livable city with buildings no more than six stories (witness Paris), I favor moving in the direction of letting the market determine building heights, while retaining city oversight of architectural design, street frontage, etc. Alternative 1 is most appealing to me on this basis.

Raising height limits now will help preserve the opportunity for residential infill later if and when the market demands it. More housing downtown and in areas where the infrastructure can support it takes the long-term pressure off future upzoning in single-family neighborhoods such as my own (Montlake). It's not clear to me that upzoning would have a negative effect on the affordable housing problem; to the extent that we help foster a pedestrian-friendly, livable city where more people can live and work in close proximity, fewer people will need to own a car, and less structured parking will ultimately be necessary, thus contributing to lowering the cost of living in Seattle or at least helping to counter an upward trend.

Having grown up in a wonderful part of Chicago where 50 story skyscrapers were built among 3-story historic townhouses, I believe that Seattle's zoning overemphasizes the benefits of gradual transitions of development height and density. The Chicago neighborhoods (Near North / Streeterville / Gold Coast) are dense, dynamic, and full of character, with interesting views of and from the structures and streets.

I favor zoning changes that would encourage narrower building footprints, perhaps with a taller structure, to preserve views, provide better views from within the structure, provide a more interesting streetscape and skyline. My main concern in this process, aside from the obvious (providing adequate transportation infrastructure), is the preservation of the most historic structures, some of which are protected by existing historic designations, but many of which are not. A young city like Seattle ought to hold on to the best examples of what little history it has.

Jonathan Dubman
2014 E Calhoun St.
Seattle, WA 98112

1

Gordon Clowers - 24 Feb Meeting on Code Changes for The "New Downtown Area".

From: Bob Hintz <rfhintz@att.net>
To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
Date: 2/20/2004 9:47 PM
Subject: 24 Feb Meeting on Code Changes for The "New Downtown Area".

Why isn't this matter being considered based upon and following appropriate modifications to Seattle's Comprehensive Plan?

R. F. Hintz

1



TOUCHSTONE CORPORATION

January 30, 2004

Dennis Meier
City of Seattle Dept. of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104-5070

Re: Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS

Dear Mr. Meier:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS ("DEIS"). I am President of Touchstone and a downtown resident.

Touchstone is the developer of a number of projects in the downtown neighborhood, including 9th and Stewart Life Sciences, Fifth and Bell, Stewart Place, and Westlake Plaza. We are also active participants in the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association and helped to prepare the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan.

Our interests as downtown residents, neighbors and property owners are to ensure that the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan is implemented, and that downtown height and density changes are approved to fulfill downtown's critically important role as the region's employment center.

Our comments on the DEIS follow:

Alternative 1. Touchstone generally supports Alternative 1. Its height and density increases are consistent with the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan, and will contribute to the area's attractiveness for office, biotech, and residential development. We note one significant omission, however. The Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan (see Figure 6) recommended increasing base FAR from 5 to 7 in the DMC zone, and from 5 to 6 in the DOC2-300 zone. The description of Alternative 1 (see Table 2) does not reference this base FAR increase. We request that the Final EIS incorporate that base FAR increase, as proposed by the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan, into the Alternative 1 proposal.

If the failure to include the base FAR increase was intended, then the Final EIS should disclose that the proposed Alternative 1 would result in a drastic increase in the cost of development. At p. 2-13 of the DEIS, it is stated that "the provision that now allows a wider range of bonus choices to be used to gain the first FAR above the base FAR in the DOC1 and DOC2 zones would be eliminated." Currently, that first FAR can be gained through the provision of on-site amenities and other project-enhancing public benefit features. As proposed, Alternative 1 eliminates that option and requires the first FAR above the base to be purchased outright, at \$22 per foot! Unless Alternative 1 includes the base FAR increase

envisioned in the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan, we would strongly oppose this proposed change. At the least, it should be fully discussed and its impacts disclosed in the Final EIS.

1

Alternative 2. Touchstone strongly opposes Alternative 2. Alternative 2, in essence, proposes to ignore all of the major recommendations of the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan. The Final EIS should acknowledge that if Alternative 2 is adopted, the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan would be eviscerated. Touchstone urges the City Council to support the neighborhood planning process, and to repudiate Alternative 2. At page 2-15, the author of the DEIS suggests that Alternative 2 proposes no changes to the DMC zone in the Denny Triangle because it is "desirable" to discourage commercial development in favor of residential, and to maintain a gradual transition to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The author neither identifies the source of this value judgment, nor does the author acknowledge that this value judgment is inconsistent with the neighborhood consensus that supports Alternative 1.

2

Alternative 3. Touchstone even more strongly opposes Alternative 3, which amounts to a downzone of much of the Denny Triangle. Not only is this inconsistent with the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan, it is also inconsistent with long established City policy to encourage downtown as the employment center of the region. It is difficult to understand why vast public resources would be expended to develop mass transit facilities to bring employees downtown, if the City were then to proceed to discourage employment growth downtown. The Final EIS should acknowledge this inconsistency and analyze its impacts.

3

TDC Program. The Draft EIS identifies the termination of the TDC program as an adverse impact of Alternative 1. The Final EIS should revise this evaluation. The TDC program, while fine in theory, is of virtually no value in the real world. It has never been used, and is never likely to be used. It is too costly and cumbersome. Thus, its loss is not an adverse impact.

4

Height, Bulk and Scale. The Draft EIS at numerous locations suggests that implementation of Alternative 1 will result in larger and more bulky buildings, and at least implies that this is an adverse impact to residential character and the downtown aesthetic environment. This evaluation is superficial, and should be refined in the Final EIS. While allowing greater height and density will surely result in larger buildings, it does not follow that these larger buildings will adversely affect the residential character or downtown aesthetic environment. Cities like New York and Chicago have succeeded in creating dynamic downtowns that include large buildings. The answer is not to crimp on size, as the author of the DEIS suggests. Rather, the answer is to utilize the design review process and to amend the land use code to allow greater design flexibility so that buildings can energize the street and the cityscape, rather than become a blot upon them. This is fully possible with good design.

5

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Touchstone Corporation



Douglas Howe, President

SAMIS LAND CO.

208 JAMES STREET, SUITE C SEATTLE, WA 98104
TELEPHONE: (206) 622-3363 FAX: (206) 622-4918
E-MAIL: samis@samis.com

February 27, 2004

Mr. Dennis Meier
City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development
700 5th Ave., Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

Re: Comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement dated November 2003,
2003 Downtown Height and Density Changes

Dear Mr. Meier:

Our company owns 22 properties in the downtown core area of Seattle. Some of these properties we have owned for more than 60 years. A healthy and vital downtown core is extremely important to the success of our properties and our tenants. Job growth and a significant increase in residential development in the downtown core are essential to a healthy and vital downtown neighborhood. We wholeheartedly support increases in height and density but do not believe that Alternative 1 in the DEIS goes far enough to allow for the appropriate density in the downtown core. Of course we need to have height and density that is appropriate for our downtown core but Alternative 1 will not allow projects with similar height and density as many of our existing buildings.

1

Increased density in our downtown core is not just a local issue. With increased density downtown we reduce the pressure for growth in our suburban and open-space areas of the region. Encouraging growth in our downtown is the best way to utilize our investments in public transportation. In November of 2003, just three months ago, the Puget Sound Regional Council directed a survey of citizens across the central Puget Sound region to gauge attitudes and opinions about quality-of-life, and an indication of the region's priorities. Nearly 1000 citizens in our four county area were surveyed and the results show some well-informed opinions; 79% favor encouraging growth over limiting growth, and 67% favor focusing growth within already developed areas.

Specific comments to the DEIS:

The document does not recognize, as it should, that downtown residential growth is actually a form of traffic mitigation and reduced parking demand. Page 3-191 in the paragraph titled "Reduce Trip Generation Through Area-Specific Rezones", it states "For example, future development of residential uses might generate fewer overall vehicle

2

trips than office development on the same properties.” The statement that residential development “might” generate fewer overall trips than office development certainly shows a lack of understanding of the downtown resident. A significant attraction to living downtown is to be close to one’s job. A great proportion of the downtown residents commute by walking or taking a bus to their place of employment. Therefore placing residents near their location of employment is traffic mitigation. On page 3-198, the discussion of Off-Street Parking exaggerates the parking demand because those downtown residents working downtown that do own cars either park their car at their work location or their home location not both. We believe a survey of parking and commuting patterns of downtown residents would show a trend of declining automobile ownership and a corresponding decline in the number of resident commuters using automobiles and parking. This does not only apply to low income or affordable housing but, as an example, a redevelopment project on Fourth and Pike successfully sold 24 residential condominium units without any parking with some of the units costing over \$2 million each. Just in the last few years we have observed a major shift in automobile dependence of the downtown resident.

We believe the growth in jobs downtown estimated in the DEIS from the year 2000 to the year 2020 is too high and that the development capacity in the downtown core is greater than described in the DEIS. This also means that the impacts from the projected job growth will be less than described in the document over this period of time. Our rationale for this conclusion is as follows: We are already four years into that 20 year period and the current inventory of vacant office space is 5.6 million square feet. This equates to the 15.8% vacancy in the total downtown office inventory of 35.6 million square feet. Assuming 250 square feet per occupant yields a job capacity of 22,500 jobs, we expect it could take eight years to absorb this capacity and office space. In addition, the planned construction of the new Washington Mutual Tower and King County office building could add another 1 million square feet of vacant office space in the core and add another year or two to absorb all of the vacant office space. This does not mean we do not need increases in height and density in the core. We need to utilize the precious little land we have in the downtown core to the greatest extent possible and by increasing the height and density we have a great opportunity when development does occur to create funds through the FAR bonus system for affordable housing. With government funds becoming so precious, this may be the best opportunity over the long-term to fund this much needed housing.

While this inventory of office space is being absorbed over the next eight to ten years, one of the best ways is to stimulate growth and develop an attractive, safe, and vital downtown core is to encourage housing in high-rise high density structures. In fact, if a significant amount of this housing is developed it could attract job growth from outside of the region and absorb the office inventory more quickly.

Recommendations:

1) Increase the maximum FAR in DOC-1 to 20, in DOC-2 to 16 and in DMC to 13. The DMC zoned properties actually offer more opportunities for development than the DOC zones and are extremely important to the long-term growth of the downtown core. As proposed in the DEIS, make available 75% of the FAR bonuses only by affordable housing TDR, payment to an affordable housing fund, or the development of affordable housing. This is the best opportunity to develop a true housing mix downtown. The remaining 25% should be gained only through landmark TDR or a contribution to fund offsite development of public open-space in the downtown core or to fund the maintenance and enhancements of existing public open-space downtown. We believe on-site amenities will be market driven and do not provide the broader community benefit of the bonus opportunities described above.

6

2) To encourage more attractive and slender buildings with better proportions we recommend height increases of 50% over the existing height limitations in the code rather than 30% proposed height increases of Alternative 1.

7

3) We believe the PCD (planned community development) process could provide some excellent design opportunities but has been underutilized because of the minimum land area requirement. We recommend that requirement be reduced to 25,000 sq. ft.

8

4) Try not to regulate the balance between employment and residential growth in the core but let the market determine what happens in the future. Right now high-rise residential development is needed for many reasons to make this a thriving downtown core, and then commercial development will follow. We also expect more development projects with mixed-uses of office and residential.

9

5) Act quickly! The increases in height and density should be adopted before the end of this year so that development that is being planned over the next several years can be better than it would be with the current land-use regulations.

10

This is a great opportunity to adopt the downtown core land-use regulations that will shape growth well beyond 2020. We look forward to being an active participant in making our downtown a greater place.

Sincerely,



William J. Justen
Managing Director, Real Estate

WJJ/

February 28, 2004



Corporate Administration
4601 Sixth Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98108
Tel (206) 624-3215 Fax (206) 624-0377

Diane Sugimura, Director
Seattle Department of Planning & Development
700 5th Avenue, Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98104

RECEIVED
MAR 02 2004

Dept. of Design
Construction & Land Use

Re: DEIS on Downtown Height & Density Changes

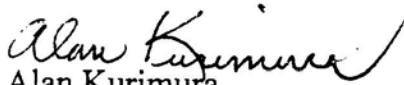
Dear Director Sugimura:

Uwajimaya strongly supports the Downtown Urban Center Plan priorities for housing and employment in downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods. Increased height and density are needed to encourage more housing and job creating uses. The City can and should do more than is presented in the four alternatives covered by the DEIS.

Tax payers are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in several transportation alternatives (to the single occupant vehicle) which will link downtown with other parts of the region. The City should encourage and support development which will create the housing and employment opportunities for users of these transportation investments.

Uwajimaya encourages the City to consider the Downtown Seattle Association's two-pronged approach.

Sincerely,


Alan Kurimura
Vice President

Cc: Greg Nickels, Mayor
Members, City Council

1

McCULLOUGH HILL EIKSO KRETSCHMER SMITH

A Professional
Service Corporation

John C. McCullough
2025 First Ave., Suite 1130
Seattle WA 98121-2100
206-448-1818
206-727-2391 direct
206-448-3444 fax
jack@mhfs.com

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN
CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE

JAN 30 2004

RECEIVED

January 30, 2004

Dennis Meier
Department of Planning & Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

Re: Downtown Height and Density Changes EIS

Dear Mr. Meier:

We are writing to provide comments on the Downtown Height and Density Changes Draft Environmental Impact Statement (the "EIS"). We address both general policy issues relating to the proposal and specific comments on the EIS below.

Policy Issues

Several policy issues were identified at the public hearing on the EIS in December 2003. These include the following:

1. **None of the alternatives goes far enough in providing additional density, height and design flexibility in the downtown core.** Even EIS Alternative 1 fails to establish downtown densities consistent with applicable Neighborhood Plan goals and appropriate in light of infrastructure investment in the area. Without additional height and density, higher building costs downtown will increase sprawl by making it cheaper to build in outlying neighborhoods when land and other costs are less. 1
2. **The EIS should address the need for greater design flexibility.** Design requirements such as upper level setbacks have added unnecessary building costs and tend to create buildings with similar massing. Design review has made many existing development standards unnecessary. 2
3. **The EIS should investigate the benefits of greater height and density in making best use of investments in mass transit.** None of the alternatives offers adequate density or height commensurate with the regional investment in transportation infrastructure. Light rail, the monorail and buses are most effective in areas with dense urban cores. The billions invested in the monorail, light rail and the bus tunnel will be ill-spent without greater downtown density. 3

4. The EIS should honor the neighborhood planning process. The Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan – which was adopted in the previous decade – should be implemented as quickly as possible. The constituent groups in the Triangle unanimously support the Plan.

4

5. Downzoning the Denny Triangle means fewer jobs and less affordable housing: Alternative 3 proposes to downzone large areas of the Denny Triangle to create more of a “residential” emphasis and to provide “buffers” for Belltown. Alternative 3 would sacrifice 30,000 jobs downtown over the next 20 years and create less housing. “Buffers” inside the Downtown core would prove counterproductive and harm the most important job production location in the entire Northwest.

5

6. Mandatory mixed-use is unnecessary and will not work: Alternative 3 proposes to require some sites in the Denny Triangle to provide mixed office/housing development on the same lot. High-density downtown mixed-use projects are too difficult to finance and develop.

6

7. Slender residential buildings can be attractive, but the Code should not penalize property owners to promote them: Slender residential buildings cost much more to build per-square-foot, which translates to higher rents and increases sprawl by making such buildings uncompetitive in the greater Seattle marketplace. The EIS is wrong to suggest that building bulk adversely affects the pedestrian environment – New York and Chicago are proof this is not true.

7

Specific Comments

We also offer the following specific comments on the EIS:

Overview

The EIS approaches the prospect of Downtown development over the next 20 years with a clear sense of inevitability. It does not question whether or to what extent development – both residential and commercial – will occur Downtown, but assumes the demand is there to be molded and regulated. In this, the EIS suffers from the lack of a regional, even City-wide, perspective. In the last development cycle, for example, the increased cost of and restrictions on Downtown property resulted in over 50% of new commercial development occurring *outside* the Downtown. Increased restrictions will only exacerbate this trend. But the EIS does not consider the entirely predictable – and documented – market reactions to increasing regulation in the Downtown area. As a result, the real impacts of Alternative 3 (which actually downzones areas of the Downtown) and of many “mitigating” measures discussed in

8

the EIS are not evaluated. These impacts will be reflected in the inevitable work of market forces to redirect new development to areas in Seattle and the region where it is less expensive and easier to achieve. Dispersal of development to areas where it cannot readily be served by transit and rail and where it will tend to impact neighborhoods will lead to a host of additional impacts. None of these impacts is addressed in the EIS.

8

It is also a limitation of the EIS that its inventory of mitigating measures focuses predominantly on new *restrictions*, rather than new *incentives*. Incentives, which will attract new and different kinds of development to areas, should play a larger role in the City's review of alternatives. New restrictions will only discourage development, and tend to divert it – as noted above – to the many areas in the region where it is easier and less expensive to accomplish.

Employment

- The EIS assumes (e.g., at 3-9) that the zoning changes proposed in each alternative are “not likely to change the amount or type of Downtown employment over twenty years.” This assumption ignores the potentially significant impacts that zoning regulations have on the comparative cost of development in different sub-markets in the region. Increasing height and density will often have the effect of decreasing per-square-foot costs of development; likewise, increasing FAR bonus values will increase such costs. Development restrictions, like floorplate limits, parking ceilings and other bulk restrictions, will alter the relative attractiveness of Downtown locations in comparison to sites in other Seattle neighborhoods or suburban cities. By assuming away this relationship between zoning regulations and market decisions regarding development location, the EIS ignores a whole host of impacts. In particular, the EIS ignores the significant likelihood that the lower densities, increased costs and unviable development restrictions of Alternative 3 will make other regional sites more attractive in comparison to Downtown, and therefore result in increased sprawl.
- Another consequence of this improper assumption is that it allows the EIS to conclude, in effect, that the four alternatives are essentially neutral as to job production over the next 20 years. For the reasons noted above, this is unlikely to be the case.

9

Housing

- **TDC Program.** The EIS implies that the loss of the TDC program in Alternative 1 would be an adverse “impact.” It is improper to suggest that the loss of a program that have never been used (nor may never be used), is

10

"adverse." The EIS acknowledges that the TDC program has never been used, but suggests that this owes to "lack of understanding or interest" on the part of developers, or the intervention of an adverse economic cycle. The EIS concludes that it is "too early to tell" if the TDC program will ever bear fruit. It is therefore speculative to suggest that the loss of the program is an "adverse" impact.¹

10

- **"Jobs/Housing Balance":** The EIS assumes that a principal goal of Downtown planning under the Comprehensive Plan is to achieve a "jobs/housing balance" within the Downtown urban center. See, e.g., EIS 1-7, 1-18. The Comprehensive Plan does not support this assumption, and in fact this assumption is inconsistent with the Plan and the applicable Neighborhood Plans, which assume that Downtown will be the principal employment center for the region. It is inappropriate for the EIS to base its assessment of housing impacts on this premise.

11

- **Low-income Housing.** From the erroneous premise that Downtown workers should live Downtown (noted above), the EIS concludes (for example) that Alternative 2 results in superior housing impacts, as compared to Alternative 1. EIS 3-23 (Alternative 2 results in a 13% increase over Alternative 1 in the proportion of low-income households that could supposedly find housing Downtown.). The EIS should note that this is the case because Alternative 2 produces fewer jobs Downtown, not because Alternative 2 creates a significantly larger inventory of affordable housing.

12

- **Housing Demand.** The EIS appears to treat Downtown housing demand as a function of household desire, suggesting that in each alternative there is likely to be a certain percentage of households that desire to live Downtown and are unable to. EIS 3-18, 3-20. There is no legitimate research to support this conclusion. Furthermore, it reflects an erroneous policy assumption that employees in an urban center should live in that urban center (see above: Jobs/Housing Balance). While this case might be argued for some urban centers, Downtown is specifically intended under the Comprehensive Plan to be an employment center that provides jobs for residents throughout the region. The City and the region are investing billions of dollars in transportation infrastructure to ensure that Downtown jobs are accessible to residents throughout the region

13

¹ In truth, the TDC program has not been used because it does not offer benefits to offset its substantial costs. This equation is unlikely to change, so it is equally unlikely that a project will ever be developed under the TDC program.

- **Mixed-use Projects.** The EIS assumes that the regulatory requirements of Alternative 3 – which mandate some mixed-use buildings in certain DMC zones – will produce more housing than other alternatives in the same zone. This assumption ignores the other factual observation made in the EIS – that such mixed-use buildings have not been successful Downtown. The market will not respond to such regulatory mandates, if they are not viable. As a result, the EIS overstates the amount of housing that would likely be produced in such DMC zones under Alternative 3.

14

- **Affordable Units.** It is initially unclear how Alternative 3, which would result in 8 million fewer square feet of office space Downtown, could result in the production of 325 more low-income housing units than Alternative 1. EIS 3-25. Upon closer inspection, it appears that the EIS achieves this result by adopting different baseline assumptions for the two alternatives. These assumptions – which are not mandated by the policy underpinning for either alternative – have the effect of understating low-income housing production in Alternative 1 and overstating its production in Alternative 3. For example:

- The EIS assumes that DOC-1 base FAR will not increase in Alternative 3, an assumption which automatically increases the funds available for low-income housing by 10%.
- The EIS assumes that Alternative 3 – in which development is more expensive, owing to the 10% increase in bonus costs – will nevertheless produce 715,000 s.f. more floor area in DOC-1 than will Alternative 1 over the next 20 years.

15

For purposes of advising the ultimate policy decisions the City needs to make, the EIS should be updated to include comparisons between alternatives based on a consistent set of assumptions.

- **Mitigation Strategies.** The discussion of housing mitigation strategies in the EIS focuses on measures that would either increase the cost of development, reduce development densities, or both. EIS 3-28. These strategies have not been evaluated in a market context, to determine whether such increased regulatory restrictions would actually produce more affordable housing – or as is more likely the case, reduce the economic feasibility of projects altogether.

16

- **Residential Amenities.** The role of residential amenities (e.g., schools, play areas) in attracting families and larger households Downtown (EIS 3-29) is an important incentive that should be further explored.

17

Land Use

- **20-year Development Model.** The long-term development model discussed in the EIS assumes that each alternative will result in the development of the same amount of total office space Downtown over 20 years. This assumes that the alternatives are neutral in their potential effects on how the market allocated commercial development between Downtown and other areas in Seattle and the region. This assumption is not supported in the EIS. In fact, it is more likely that alternatives that accommodate higher-density development opportunities at lower cost will tend to attract more commercial development to the Downtown in the long-term, as compared to alternatives that focus on lower-density, higher-cost development.

18

In other words, the EIS leaves one with the conclusion that zoning is irrelevant over a 20-year cycle – that production of new office and residential space is purely dictated by demand. EIS 3-9. This fails to account for the regional nature of demand. The EIS does not look at this issue (i.e., capture rates for new development within the Downtown, as compared to other areas in the region); the EIS analysis is only a capacity analysis.

- **Maximization of Density.** It should not be assumed that developers will maximize office floor area allowed under the Code. EIS 3-48. While this has been the case in past years, the 80% increase in per-square-foot costs for floor area bonus (from \$13 to \$22 per s.f.) in 2001, together with the significant increase in vacant space and tightening of underwriting standards, indicates that developers may avoid full-FAR development to avoid the cost of bonus square footage or to bring projects to market more rapidly. Most other office markets in the region do not impose such fees on additional square footage, and Downtown developers must compete against these markets.
- **Regional Impacts.** The EIS limits its review of land use impacts to a small fraction of the developable area of the City. It tends to focus on the perceived "adverse" impacts of density, without considering the inevitable impacts associated with the dislocation of Downtown development to areas elsewhere in the City and the region. If commercial office demand is not satisfied in Downtown, where it can best be served by regional rail and transit, it will occur in Seattle neighborhoods and suburban communities, which lack similar transportation infrastructure. Alternative 1 minimizes these impacts to other neighborhoods and communities, but this fact is not addressed in the EIS.

19

20

Height, Bulk & Scale

- The EIS asserts that the DMC zone was created to promote a “desired transition area.” EIS 3-83. From this, the EIS develops a new concept of “sensitive transition areas” in order to justify certain conclusions relating to the potential “impacts” on these “sensitive” areas under Alternative 1. This assessment has no basis in the Comprehensive Plan or in the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan. If the EIS is attempting to draw conclusions from assumptions about legislative intent in the City Council’s adoption of the LUTP in 1985, those conclusions have been superseded by multiple Plan and Code changes in the intervening years. 21
- The EIS makes much of alleged “bulk” impacts in certain areas of Downtown, but offers no foundation for such “impacts” in the City’s SEPA Ordinance. In fact, the SEPA Ordinance presumes that the use of the City’s design review process will mitigate such “impacts.” 22
- It is inappropriate for the EIS to suggest that alley vacation approvals may lead to adverse bulk and scale impacts Downtown. Relatively few alley vacations have been concluded in the Downtown in the last decade, and in cases where approvals have been granted, they are inevitably site- and project-specific approvals, subject to additional layers of design review and conditioning. It is not legitimate to draw broad-based conclusions from such few examples.² Further, where such alley vacations have been approved, they have also been used to accommodate unique site conditions (e.g., landmark buildings) or to mitigate building massing issues through increased site utilization. None of these considerations is discussed in the EIS. 23
- “Slender” residential buildings cannot merely be mandated by Code, and the EIS is correct to focus on incentives to promote the development of such buildings (such as height bonuses). EIS 3-102. Slender residential buildings will be substantially more expensive to construct, and therefore less able to compete in the market against residential product developed in other Seattle neighborhoods and nearby suburbs. As a result, it is less likely that the market will produce such buildings Downtown, unless compensating benefits (such as additional height) are provided. 24

² Nor is it clear that the concept of “prohibiting” alley vacations in certain areas (EIS 3-104), which would require one City Council to limit the legislative discretion of a future City Council, is even legally possible.

- "Slender" office buildings pose a more critical problem. Market demand for office space typically dictates a minimum floorplate size of 20,000 square feet or more. Such floorplates are readily provided in office developments in other Seattle and regional locations; and if Downtown buildings cannot meet this threshold, they will not be able to compete in the regional market. As such, new buildings – if subject to floorplate limits – are unlikely to be built Downtown. The same problems inhere in the EIS's suggested "mitigation" for height and bulk: creating obstacles to "large-floor-plate structures extending to the prescribed height limit." EIS 3-103. This "mitigation" is a formula for diverting Downtown development to outlying areas. 25
- We strongly discourage the propagation of DMR development standards in other areas Downtown as a mitigation measure. EIS 3-102. 26
- The concept of converting residential floor area to "chargeable FAR" space would be a major step backward in Downtown planning. EIS 3-103. Such a step would run counter to the strong policies of the Downtown Plan and its Neighborhood Plans, and would significantly undermine the prospect of increased residential development in the long-term. The EIS offers this "mitigation" measure without any consideration of its impacts on housing creation Downtown or its relationship to plans and policies. 27
- Development "overlays" for newly-minted "sensitive transition areas" will only reduce the likelihood of development in these areas. For this reason, it would be a mistake to assume that such overlays would produce superior development. 28

Urban Design

- The EIS should acknowledge the important role played by the retail bonus in the development of active pedestrian environments. Changes to the retail bonus scheme in 2001 were not based on an evaluation of its usefulness in this regard. Ultimate proposals in 2004 should consider restoring this bonus more broadly throughout the Downtown. 29
- The EIS (at B-3) assumes that 5% of necessary bonuses must be obtained from Landmarks TDR, if available. It is not clear that this is the manner in which the Code is presently being applied. 30

Transportation & Parking

- For Alternatives 2 and 3, the EIS should acknowledge the City-wide and regional effects of dispersing development that would otherwise occur 31

Downtown under Alternative 1. This amounts to more than 30,000 jobs, which means that some 8 million square feet of office space would need to be accommodated in Seattle neighborhoods and suburban cities – where transit ridership levels are only a fraction of that Downtown.

31

- The EIS should consider eliminating the minimum parking requirements for commercial uses Downtown. Parking ceilings, however, should not be lowered, since to do so would make Downtown projects significantly less competitive with other regional markets (where such parking ceilings do not exist).

32

- The anticipated loss of parking lots and structures near the retail core underscores the need to promote the development of new short-term parking supplies accessible to this critical shopping area. Ultimate proposals should examine both the permitted uses and bonus structure of the Code to ensure this will occur.

33

Energy

- The EIS should evaluate the new project costs imposed by requiring LEED improvements or certification for Downtown buildings, and the effect of such increased costs on the ability of Downtown to attract new development (in comparison to other regional markets, in which such additional costs are not imposed).

34

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments on the EIS.

Very truly yours,



John C. McCullough

JCM:amc

McCULLOUGH•HILL•FIKSO•KRETSCHMER•SMITH

2025 First Ave., Suite 1130
Seattle WA 98121-2100
206.448.1818
206.448.3444 fax
mhfs.com

MEMORANDUM

February 27, 2004

TO: Diane Sugimura
John Rahaim

FROM: Jack McCullough

RE: Further Comments on Downtown EIS

Working with a group of Downtown owners, developers, residents and architects, we have prepared a list of more specific suggestions for the preparation of a package of Code amendments to modify and implement EIS Alternative 1. They are attached.

The current Downtown EIS examines four broad alternatives to future development in the Downtown core. Many commenters have suggested that Alternative 1 – which most closely reflects the approved Neighborhood Plans – still does not go far enough to ensure that the next cycle of development Downtown will embody the goals and objectives of these Plans.

Of course, the Draft EIS alternatives are necessarily stated at a level of some generality, and cannot at this early stage incorporate every possible Code change that may be reflected in a final, adopted ordinance. It is appropriate now, however, to begin to identify those additional improvements and modifications to specific Code language that will help to ensure that the final package of amendments best implements the Neighborhood Plans.

What follows is a list of such possible Code changes. It is intended as a menu of options and designed to help inform the preparation of an ultimate package of proposals for consideration by the City Council. This list reflects many of the comments made during the two Draft EIS hearings held in December 2003 and February 2004, and is based on the following goals and assumptions:

- This current Code revision exercise is directed by, and intended to implement, the City's adopted GMA Comprehensive Plan and the Neighborhood Plans for the Downtown.
- The Downtown will soon be the hub of billions of dollars of new high-capacity regional transit systems. Thus, attraction of regional jobs is a key goal of these Plans; but so should be a significant increase – even a doubling, as suggested by the Mayor – in the Downtown residential population.
- Bringing more residents of all income levels Downtown will depend upon offering a broader and more complete palette of services and amenities to serve them, including usable open space, neighborhood-level shopping opportunities, and even schools.
- The low-income housing bonus provisions adopted in 2001 should be preserved, but also strengthened in key ways, by broadening the geographic scope of the program, making the payment program more flexible, and ensuring an adequate supply of amenities to serve all residential populations.
- The City this year should complete the work begun in 1999, to properly rezone key sites in the Pike/Pine corridor so as to help assure their redevelopment in the next cycle.
- Regulatory prohibitions may help prevent certain kinds of development, but ultimately cannot *attract* the positive development projects the Downtown needs. Instead, incentives should be the key elements in this package of Code amendments, and those incentives should be *market-based*.

1

Improve Urban Design

<p>Enhance the Design Review Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the range of design departures to include new elements, such as height. • Clarify the Downtown design guidelines to ensure that departures are granted for good design, not in exchange for other "benefits" 	<p><i>The Downtown DRB has had a commendable record in the last decade, and has earned the opportunity to address a broader range of departures.</i></p>	2
<p>Eliminate Needless Upper-Level Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate or simplify the following bulk and dimensional standards of the Code: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Upper-level "setbacks" and coverage limitations ◦ General setback formulas 	<p><i>These standards tend to promote a uniformity of design and penalize development on smaller sites.</i></p>	3
<p>Modify the Access-to-Parking Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the hierarchy of locations to access for parking, emphasizing curbcuts on streets of least pedestrian importance, but preserving alleys for service and loading functions. 	<p><i>Principal building entrances and loading areas don't mix well. Driveway entrances at the street make projects more attractive for residents and employees.</i></p>	4
<p>Provide for a Transition in Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an optional "transition overlay" on sites located between zones (DOC-1, DOC-2, DMC) in Downtown, to reduce bulk impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <u>Split-zoned Sites</u>: Allow height and density to be moved around freely on large (e.g., full block) split-zoned sites. Height and density could be increased on 	<p><i>Split-zoned sites can pose a particular challenge for addressing changes in scale. Providing additional flexibility for these and other transition sites would be a useful design tool.</i></p>	5

<p>the less-intense side of the block (above nominal zoning limits on that portion of the site), as long as overall development intensity and height does not exceed that permitted on the site as a whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Single-zoned Sites:</i> On uniformly-zoned sites located on a boundary with another zone, allow height and density increases equal to half the difference between the two adjoining zones. 		5
<p>Create a More Interesting Skyline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a more interesting skyline, allow floor area to be transferred from sites within three blocks and "stacked" on top of existing height limits, up to 750' in DOC-1, 600' in DOC-2 and 400' in DMC-240, subject to a dispersal criterion (e.g., "stacking" could not occur within three blocks of another "stacked" site in the same zone). 	<p><i>Uniform height limits create a "ceiling" on the skyline. Allowing height to be "stacked" in a limited way within a small area will tend to create skyline diversity without increasing underlying density.</i></p>	6
<p>Promote Slender Residential Towers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide height bonus for slender residential towers (see below) 	<p><i>The importance of this goal is discussed below.</i></p>	7

Promote Residential Development

<p>Allow TDR from Residential Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow transfer of unused development rights from residential project sites to other sites within Downtown. 	<p><i>Even limited to the 25% bonus tier, this measure would help jump-start future Downtown housing.</i></p>
<p>Promote Slender Residential Towers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the development of slender residential towers by eliminating height limits for "slender" residential buildings in DOC-1, DOC-2 and DMC zones. "Slender" residential towers will have different meanings in different contexts, depending upon lot size, block size, and adjoining development. 	<p><i>Because "slender" residential buildings are more expensive per-square-foot to build, they will not be able to compete in the greater Seattle market – and therefore will not be built – without significant incentives. In all cases, slender should focus on the area above 85', allowing the potential for base-level office.</i></p>
<p>Provide Energy Code Relief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relieve Downtown residential buildings from the obligation to comply fully with the new Energy Code. 	<p><i>Downtown housing reduces regional energy costs in many ways. Recognizing these regional savings, energy code relief will make Downtown housing more affordable and more attractive.</i></p>
<p>Provide Residential Amenity Bonuses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide new bonuses for critical residential amenities, like supermarkets and schools. (See the discussion below.) 	<p><i>Since such bonuses benefit housing at all income levels and since few of these opportunities will arise, this bonus could be offered in all bonus tiers.</i></p>
<p>Provide "Kid-Friendly" Amenity Bonuses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the bonus program to create incentives for kid-friendly housing projects, such as those with play areas or a family-oriented unit mix. 	<p><i>Modifications to the open space bonus program could help to achieve this goal.</i></p>

7

8

9

<p><i>Restore the Childcare Production Bonus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore childcare production as an independent bonus item in all bonus tiers. 	<p><i>Lack of a childcare production option will preclude new private-sector childcare operations Downtown. Since this bonus benefits housing at all income levels, this bonus could be offered in all bonus tiers.</i></p>		9
<p><i>Provide Other Code Relief</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relieve Downtown residential buildings, particularly "slender" ones, from the obligation to comply fully with certain provisions of other construction Codes. 	<p><i>"Slender" residential buildings are more expensive per-square-foot to build, and will not compete in the greater Seattle market without Code flexibility, such as on certain exiting requirements.</i></p>		10

Make Downtown More Attractive for Residents and Families

<p>Create More Usable Downtown Open Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the open space bonus to provide for a major neighborhood open space bonus category, to be generated by contribution to a minimum 20,000 s.f. public open space within three blocks of a project site. • Allow office and residential buildings to provide required open space off-site, within three blocks of the site, as part of a major neighborhood open space. 	<p><i>Focusing open space contributions on neighborhood-wide opportunities will provide benefits throughout the area.</i></p>
<p>Provide a Bonus for Open Space Capital Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an open space bonus for capital improvements to existing Downtown parks and open spaces within three blocks of the project site. 	<p><i>In some areas, improvements to existing open spaces will be more critical and feasible than the creation of new ones.</i></p>
<p>Provide a Bonus for Open Space O & M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a new bonus for costs of operation and maintenance of a publicly-accessible open space. 	<p><i>Improving operation and maintenance of an open space, whether existing or new, can immediately make it more usable to local residents and employees.</i></p>
<p>Restore and Enhance the Retail Bonus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore bonus for retail, restaurant and entertainment uses at street level; increase geographic scope of bonus; restore bonus for upper floor retail space. • Create new bonus category for supermarket use (minimum 20,000 s.f. store); allow supermarket to be 	<p><i>The loss of this bonus, which was eliminated in passing in 2001, will be a major detriment to Downtown and its residential and pedestrian environment. It <u>must</u> be restored and its scope expanded to include new areas in the Denny Triangle. As noted above, the supermarket bonus</i></p>

11

12

developed off-site and up to two blocks outside of Downtown boundary, but not within five blocks of the Pike Place Market.	<i>will benefit all housing Downtown.</i>
<i>Redevelopment of Existing Sites</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Downtown sites (e.g., Bank of Cal) have potential redevelopment areas, but little available or affordable FAR. Provide "free"2 FAR (in addition to existing development) to spur redevelopment, if improvements are made to street-level uses. 	<i>This measure could help to re-energize pedestrian streets in the DOC-1 area south of the retail core, by triggering pedestrian-friendly development that would not otherwise occur.</i>

12

13

Make Efficient Use of High-Capacity Transit to Attract Regional Employment

<p><i>Eliminate Unnecessary Mitigation Authority</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the Seattle SEPA policies to eliminate further mitigation authority for transportation impacts Downtown for all uses. 	<p><i>Several billion dollars will be spent in the next decade on new transportation infrastructure Downtown. Physical "mitigation" by individual projects continues to be impractical and unnecessary. In addition to public transit infrastructure, transportation management plans (TMPs) and parking limitations provide the most significant traffic-related mitigation, and both are already required by Code.</i></p>
<p><i>Increase Densities Consistent with the Neighborhood Plan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase maximum density to 20 in DOC-1, 16 in DOC-2 and 13 in DMC. Increase base FAR levels accordingly. 	<p><i>These densities are consistent with the Neighborhood Plan and are necessary to support Downtown's new mass-transit and transportation infrastructure.</i></p>

14

15

<p>Link Density to Infrastructure Corridors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow density increases within four blocks of high-capacity rail transit (light rail, monorail, streetcar). 	<p><i>This new infrastructure will provide the spines along which new development can grow.</i></p>		16
<p>Eliminate Minimum Parking Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate minimum parking requirements. 	<p><i>Minimum parking requirements have already been eliminated for residential uses, and are unnecessary for office uses in some cases.</i></p>		17
<p>Restore the Short-term Parking Bonus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore the bonus for short-term parking in areas near retail shopping. 	<p><i>Like the retail bonus, this bonus was lost in 2001. Yet with the likely loss of many surface parking lots near the retail core in the future, there is more need than ever to preserve parking opportunities for Downtown shoppers.</i></p>		18
<p>Promote New Parking Garages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase maximum distance for off-site parking from 800' to 1600' Downtown. 	<p><i>This may help promote the construction of a limited number of new garages for Downtown parking.</i></p>		19

Promote Low-Income Housing

<p>Expand the Scope of Low-Income Housing Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow housing TDRs to be generated from sites outside Downtown but within the Center City. 	<p><i>Downtown land is too expensive to be the sole opportunity for low-income housing production. Nearby sites in the Center City will provide more low-income housing in locations still accessible to all critical services.</i></p>	<p>20</p>
<p>Allow the Housing Bonus Value to Reflect Market Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the housing bonus value – which was set at the height of the boom market – to float to reflect market conditions. 	<p><i>This measure would not reduce the level of resources available to low-income housing, but help to ensure a steadier and more predictable flow of financial support.</i></p>	<p>21</p>

Make the Land Use Code More Understandable and Flexible

<p><i>Make the PCD (Planned Community Development) Tool More Flexible and Streamlined</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow PCDs in all Downtown zones. • Reduce minimum PCD area to 40,000 s.f. • Increase regulatory flexibility with PCDs beyond existing list of departures (to include height) and to provide flexibility under other codes (e.g., building, energy, etc.). • Allow administrative approval of PCDs. 	<p><i>Broadening the availability of this tool and streamlining its process will make it an attractive option for new and creative Downtown projects.</i></p>
<p><i>Make the Use of TDRs More Flexible</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate limits on TDRs within-block and between zones (in DOC-1, DOC-2 and DMC). • Allow transfers from low-income housing, landmark and open space sites of both base FAR and the opportunity to provide bonuses to the base FAR. • Allow transfer of unused base FAR from residential sites throughout downtown 	<p><i>Making the more flexible use of such TDRs available within limited portions of the bonus tiers will spur the production of low-income housing and other development. Providing the opportunity to build bonuses on low-income housing TDR will strongly promote the use of this important bonus.</i></p>

22

23

Complete the Pike/Pine Corridor

<p><i>Adopt Zoning to Promote the Redevelopment of the "Missing Link" in the Pike/Pine Corridor.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the originally-intended rezone of the two half-blocks between Pine and Union (east of 2d Avenue) to DMC, in order to promote redevelopment of key sites in this critical corridor between the Market and the retail core.	<p><i>The two half-blocks between Pine and Union (east of 2d Avenue) were originally planned and reviewed for DMC zoning in 1999 under the current Downtown Plan, but were not rezoned. Some zoning changes were made in 2001, but not enough to ensure redevelopment. Now is the time to complete the rezoning of these sites, since redevelopment is unlikely occur without such strong policy and Code support.</i></p>
--	--

24

Gordon Clowers - Downtown height/density proposals

From: "Steve Mooney" <smooney27@hotmail.com>
To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
Date: 2/5/2004 5:44 PM
Subject: Downtown height/density proposals

I'm not sure if you're the right person to send written comments to regarding the downtown density proposal, but your name was on the website, so I figure you'd at least know whom to forward it to.

I write to comment in favor of increased residential density downtown. A denser downtown means a more lively downtown, less regional traffic, and a more sustainable region. I believe the market can best choose the ratio of offices to residential units and therefore support Alternative 1 most, followed by Alternative 3.

Thanks.

Steve Mooney
1800 Boylston Ave #204
Seattle, WA 98122



1

Downtown DEIS / Height and Density Changes

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have comments about the Downtown Draft Environmental Impact Statement, please let us know:

I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE #1,
WITH THE PROVISION THAT THE ADDITIONAL HEIGHT
BE USED ONLY FOR HOUSING & NOT ADDITIONAL
OFFICE DEVELOPMENT. MY INTEREST IS SPECIFICALLY
WITHIN THE DMC ZONE WHICH IS A TRANSITION
ZONE.

ALSO, WORK AT BULK FORMULAS THAT REWARD
SKINNY TOWERS & ROOF TOP OPEN SPACE, EVEN IF
PRIVATE.

1

2

(Optional)

Name TONY PUMA

Affiliation _____

Address 94 PIKE ST. #39 Zip 98101

E-mail _____ Day phone 617.7862

Return this form to:

Gordon Clowers • Department of Planning and Development • 700 5th Avenue, Suite 2000
PO Box 34019 • Seattle, WA 98124-4019
Fax (206) 233-7883 • E-mail gordon.clowers@seattle.gov

GREGORY BRODERICK SMITH
REAL ESTATE

January 30, 2004



Dennis Meier
Department of Planning & Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

Re: Downtown Height and Density Changes EIS

Dear Mr. Meier:

We are writing to provide comments on the Downtown Height and Density Changes Draft Environmental Impact Statement (the "EIS").

1. We endorse the suggestion in the EIS that new incentives, like height bonuses, be used to promote the development of slender residential buildings Downtown (page 3-102). We suggest that the Final EIS consider specific incentives for slender residential buildings, such as:
 - A 40% height bonus for buildings with residential floors not greater than 10,000 square feet.
 - The ability to transfer unused commercial FAR from residential sites that use small floorplates.
 - Elimination of upper-level setbacks and coverage limitations for slender residential buildings.
 - These incentives should be applied in all zones throughout the Downtown.
2. The Final EIS should review alternatives for transitional height increases for the perimeter of the DRC zone, where it borders zones of greater height and density.
3. We encourage the City to take a broader look at the overall Center City, and examine new development alternatives for areas, like the South Downtown, that are likely to attract much new development in the next decade.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

GREGORY BRODERICK SMITH REAL ESTATE

Greg Smith
Chief Executive Officer

810 THIRD AVENUE
SEATTLE, WA 98104-1620
MAIN 206.262.2880
FAX 206.262.2889

Gordon Clowers - My Comments about Building Great Downtown Neighborhoods Public Forum

From: "John Smith" <johnsmith1022@hotmail.com>
To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
Date: 2/26/2004 2:21 PM
Subject: My Comments about Building Great Downtown Neighborhoods Public Forum

Dear Mr Clowers

I work in the S Lake Union area and go through the Belltown area N of Pike Place market daily.

DCLU or whatever their new name is should be ashamed of itself for permitting the developers to rape and ravage the land so badly. The supermassive, tall buildings near Western, south of Mercer and the abomination coming up on Thomas and Minor should never be approved. Over development is not a good thing except for the developer and DCLU.

Overcourse developers have to develop and DCLU has to "support" it's customers so there's a lot of justifying each others' existence and conflict of interest there.

A developer puts up an abomination then moves on. He does not have to stand in it's shadows everyday (because the dang thing blocks out all the sun/daylight. He just rapes the land then moves on to the next victim (opps. I meant "project.")

JS

1

Gordon Clowers

Land Use Planner

Dept. Planning & Development

City of Seattle

Feb. 27 2004

Atten. Downtown Seattle Draft EIS

There doesn't appear to be any Cumulative Effects analysis. It might analyze say, travel times at key intersections during peak hours at levels of predicted service when one or more lanes are closed for months at a time when a new development has its construction equipment on-site and construction is in progress. A concern under this scenario might be violations of the Clean Air Act. Which reminds me -- -- why wasn't there a Air analysis included in the Draft EIS ? City air isn't exactly the cleanest air and I'd appreciate to know just how bad the air's going to be getting in yearly increments as well as under worst case day scenarios. I walk everyday.

I want to express my disappointment at not finding any analysis for environmental health issues ... NOISE, TOXIC/HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, and RISK EXPOSURE.. I'd be grateful if I could be given that data. This is another area where a Cumulative Effects Analysis could provide useful information for a "livability index

1

I would like to request an analysis of the current City-owned street - lighting system under a light & glare study. I hear the poles we use today are a glare and shadow hazard for both pedestrians and motor vehicle operators and that there are better street light systems than ours.

4

I'm not too happy about seeing the dire forecast for any public open space. Isn't there a requirement from the City's Comp Plan for Public Open Space? I hope the Open Space TDR idea gets put in the winning alternative. I understand trees, shrubs, grasses can actually help clean the air. If we're adding thousands of new jobs and thousands of residents, I'd like to think that the city can do better than 1.8 -2.2 acres for new designated park open space.!

5

Could you include a section for how deferred issues that were raised by the public and/or regulatory agencies will be addressed and describe the proposed temporal and spatial scales that will be used analyzing these issues. I think the traditional EIS process and expected results of any mitigation is a "one-time event " (i.e., results from intensive research, modeling, and other computations or expert opinions are analyzed, the analysis of potential environmental impacts is prepared, mitigation measures are identified, and a document is released for public review). Unfortunately, this process does not account for unanticipated changes in environmental conditions, inaccurate predictions, or subsequent information that might affect the original environmental protections. Is this how the City see s it's itself moving "Toward a Sustainable Seattle" Will there be performance measures to monitor the predicted success expected and to validate this success of the winning alternative that gets put into Code language ?

6

2

I favor a necessary review for the Bonus Credit \$ value that developers have to pay to buy extra square footage. This review should be codified and done every 3-5 years or else tie it to a growth yearly index .

7

I'm more than a little worried about the transitional boundary and the bulk and mass differential between two vastly differently scaled neighborhoods. This pertains especially to the Denny Triangle and the Cascade neighborhoods. How will the City be dealing with this dilemma? Re-reading some of the mitigation strategies of Height/Bulk/Scale in section C, page 102, leads me to believe, some of these will be necessary to accomplish a compatible relationship to the natural environment , existing buildings, and proposed buildings and the streetscape. I'd be appreciative if the City could control bulk to a reasonable extent. I 'd like to see taller, more slender buildings.

8

Thanks

Scott Species
1814 Minor Ave. # 202
Seattle, WA. 98101

3

CLISE PROPERTIES, INC.



PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Diane Sugimura, Director
Department of Planning & Development
City of Seattle
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104-5070

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN
CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE

FEB 27 2004

RECEIVED

Re: Downtown Height and Density Changes EIS

Dear Ms. Sugimura:

We are writing to provide comments on the Downtown Height and Density Changes Draft Environmental Impact Statement (the "EIS").

It is critical that the commercial nature of the Downtown Office Core 2 ("DOC-2") and Downtown Mixed Commercial ("DMC") zones be preserved for the expansion of Downtown's commercial core. The DOC-2 zone needs to provide for the future capability of headquarters type users like Nordstrom and Washington Mutual. The DMC zone needs increased height and density as an adjunct to the DOC-2 zones.

Proposal

1. **Height.** Allow for increases in maximum height in DOC-2 zones up to 650 feet, and in DMC-240 zones up to 400 feet. These height increases could be area-wide.
2. **Density.** Provide for increases in allowable density as follows:

<i>Zone</i>	<i>EIS Alternative 1</i>	<i>New Proposal</i>
DOC-2	13-14 FAR maximum	16 FAR maximum
DMC	10 FAR maximum	13 FAR maximum

Again, these proposed density increases could be area-wide or could focus on localized sites within each zoning designation area. Increased densities will help to attract thousands of new jobs to Downtown Seattle.

3. Provide for the ability to transfer commercial development rights within the DMC and DOC-2 zones. This important part of the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan will help create open space and housing.

4. **New Bonuses.** By increasing the maximum FAR, new bonus tiers could be created. This additional FAR bonus value could be allocated to a range of important public benefits, including low-income housing, open space and neighborhood amenities. 3
5. **Building Design.** Eliminate restrictive building regulations, such as upper-level setbacks and coverage limitations. These regulations, which predate the City's Downtown design review process by a decade, promote uniformity in the massing of Downtown buildings. The design review process tends to foster improved and imaginative design, and provides more flexibility than the current Code. 4

Benefits

The potential benefits of these proposals will be significant for the Downtown, for Seattle as a whole and for the region in general. These benefits include:

- Increased employment production Downtown;
- Promotion of new residential development;
- More efficient use of existing and proposed mass transit options;
- Greater production of low-income housing;
- Provision of more open space Downtown;
- Enhanced building design;
- Increased tax revenue;
- Optimal use of new infrastructure, including several billion dollars in high-capacity transportation improvements Downtown. 5

In conclusion we ask that the Department of Planning and development take quick action in processing the DEIS and the resulting legislation. We believe it is critical to Seattle's future economic viability as well as the city's livability that these common sense changes be made to reflect our new urban vision of the city

Sincerely,



Richard H. Stevenson
President and COO

The Power to Change
The Power to Build

January 20, 2004

City of Seattle
Department of Planning and Development
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, Washington 98104



Attention: Diane Sugimura, Dennis Meier

Subject: Downtown Height and Density Changes DEIS

Dear Diane and Dennis:

During the preparation of the Downtown Urban Center Plan, the urban village neighborhoods and the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group worked diligently with city staff to envision how downtown could continue to sustain its growth as the pre-eminent urban center for the region. At the same time, the citizen and professional planners wanted to ensure that downtown would also become a fabric of communities accommodating diverse interests, values, and needs. The underlying framework of land use policies and regulations controlling private investment throughout Seattle is very complex, and for downtown, this complexity can be burdensome to everyone involved in the design and development of projects, whether commercial or residential. The 2001 amendments to the bonus and TDR code provisions were a welcome start to the daunting task of addressing this complexity.

The current prospect of changing downtown height and density provisions of the code is another building block of what many hope will be a continually evolving process. The DEIS provides a valuable snapshot of conditions ranging through all of the usual environmental "elements", and also the important factors of real estate economics and pedestrian amenities. The market's response to public regulations over a long time period is very difficult to parse. So, the DEIS helps us to understand the relationships between the variables and how they may combine to form the "big picture".

The analysis indicates that there are few major differences between the alternatives. It appears the most significant choice is between in the degree of scale between the office orientation of the "High End" Alternative 1 and the "Residential Emphasis" of Alternative 3. Probably the most alarming of the few "significant unavoidable adverse impacts" revealed is the decline of public open space, per capita, under all alternatives.

1

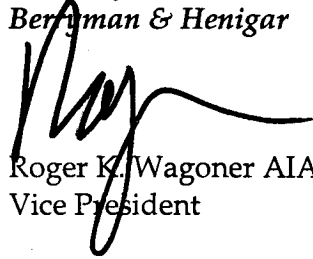
So, while the DEIS provides an excellent source of information regarding current and possible future conditions in the downtown, it leaves the decision-makers with an important question: *No matter which of the alternatives is selected, how will the City proceed with needed changes to land use, transportation, design, public services, and other investment strategies, policies, and regulations in order to foster the quality of community development to which we aspire?*

1

I hope that the FEIS will be more assertive in identifying a "preferred alternative" that includes a strategic approach to linking the regulation of private development with public investment and community development funding so that the downtown can grow, but in such a way that the neighborhoods will also continue to be replenished.

2

Sincerely,
Berryman & Henigar



Roger K. Wagoner AIA, FAICP
Vice President

GORDON CLOWERS - IWALL COMMENTS DEIS DOWNTOWN ZONING

From: "irene wall" <iwall@serv.net>
To: <Dennis.Meier@seattle.gov>
Date: 2/29/2004 11:03 PM
Subject: IWall comments DEIS Downtown Zoning
CC: "Tom Rasmussen" <Tom.Rasmussen@seattle.gov>, "David Della" <David.Della@Seattle.gov>, "Jean Godden" <Jean.Godden@seattle.gov>, "Jan Drago" <jan.drago@seattle.gov>, "Jim Compton" <Jim.Compton@seattle.gov>, "Nick Licata" <nick.licata@seattle.gov>, "Peter Steinbrueck" <peter.steinbrueck@seattle.gov>, "Richard Conlin" <richard.conlin@seattle.gov>, "Richard McIver" <richard.mciver@seattle.gov>

I R E N E W A L L

February 29, 2004

Mr. Dennis Meier
 City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development
 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
 Seattle, WA 98104-5070

Re: Comments on DEIS for Downtown Height and Density Changes

Dear Dennis:

The *bulk and scale* of the DEIS itself portends the "supersizing" of downtown Seattle envisioned under Alternative 1 yet the final EIS should expand to include analysis of other alternatives to achieve the underlying goals leading to these proposals. Additionally the final EIS should clarify what those underlying goals are and what the public interest is in achieving them. Given that the projected employment and housing growth targets can be met under Alternative 4 (existing zoning), what is compelling a reconsideration of downtown zoning at this time? In other words, what is the purpose and need for the proposal and what public benefits will result?

1

The final EIS should address the overall capacity of development in downtown in light of proposed amendments to Seattle's Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the WOSCA site and South Lake Union (SLU) into the downtown urban center and to change land uses in the Interbay area. According to the December 2003 report by the Seattle Office of Policy and Management, SLU alone is expected to accommodate 23,000 new jobs and 11,000 new housing units. These represent a significant percentage of the total goals for downtown. What need is there for additional height and density incentives in any other areas downtown under these circumstances?

2

The FEIS should also address how simultaneous growth in SLU and other areas downtown will affect the need for capital investment in electrical substations and transmission/distribution facilities. The DEIS states that a new substation to serve downtown is needed by 2012. Will this be the new SLU substation or will the projected growth require more than one new substation to serve downtown?

3

Please clarify the net loss of off-street parking spaces under the alternatives and whether or not there is sufficient transit capacity and routes to meet the demand for displaced cars. Are current development regulations sufficient to prevent the first floors of new buildings from becoming garages rather than below grade parking?

4

The DEIS identifies many important and unresolved issues of public policy for managing growth in Seattle. The relationship between downtown growth and meeting growth (jobs and housing) goals in other areas of the city needs to be considered. There are many under performing areas of Seattle, particularly in the East/Central, Southwest and Southeast sectors. The FEIS should consider an alternative which provides height and density increases for downtown properties in exchange for developer investment in urban villages outside downtown which are not meeting their employment and housing goals under the

5

Comprehensive Plan. This way the engine of downtown development is harnessed for citywide benefits.

5

Similarly, the FEIS should identify an alternative which links the proposed height and FAR increases to the provision of needed amenities such as significant parcels of downtown open space or accommodating monorail stations within the footprint of new developments.

6

The proposed broad upzones contemplated, particularly Alternative 1, will constitute a major grant of increased value/wealth to owners of downtown parcels. At the same time, the DEIS identifies many issues and goals related to "livability" and "quality of life" impacts which come with increased density. The mechanism of a contract rezone provides for a balancing of benefits between private development interests and the public realm. The FEIS should include an alternative, which evaluates the use of contract rezones as a means of securing public benefits in proportion to the value of the increased development capacity. If the overall goal of these proposals is to jumpstart further economic activity downtown, contract rezones have the additional benefit of providing more certainty that the development activity will occur within a specific timeframe.

7

The DEIS provides an interesting timeline from 1999 of increasing TDR, TDC and outright zoning changes which were provided as an incentive to housing development downtown, yet the Denny Triangle area has only achieved 8% of its targeted 20 year growth in housing since 1994 despite having huge opportunities for mixed commercial and housing development. That history suggests that zoning incentives are insignificant motivators compared to market forces and calls into question the necessity of any such upzones to achieve housing production goals. It may make more sense to downzone areas in the Regrade to produce "human scale" buildings and brownstone style developments and use deferred property taxes to provide incentives for moderate income housing in that area if necessary. These upzones appear to be too crude an instrument to secure the variety of development desired downtown including housing for families, and the types of institutional and recreation uses which families with children need.

8

The Final EIS should provide more analysis of the costs/benefit of the proposals, including an estimate of the private economic value of the increased development capacity provided under these rezone scenarios and new revenue to the city resulting from the increased development capacity as well as the cost in public infrastructure for the alternatives. This cost/benefit analysis will inform discussion of implementing development impact fees in Seattle, an item on the work agenda for the Department of Planning and Development.

9

General Comments:

The view protection chapter suggests that eliminating SEPA view protection entirely from downtown development as a possible mitigation. I entirely disagree with this approach! Instead the long delayed DCLU work program to finish the SEPA view protection study begun in 2001 should be completed and specific protections for views of the skyline and natural features should be instigated for conditioning MUPs and for possible downzones. All of the view impact mitigation identified on page 3-146 and 3-147 should be implemented. Similarly the long delayed review of street and alley vacation policies should be completed before any more alley or street vacations are granted.

10

Some of the figures in the Appendix K are missing from the PDF files posted on the website. This should be corrected.

The notion that the proposed FAR and height changes will result in "Vancouver style" development has been debunked in the DEIS but need to be made explicit in the Final EIS because public officials are still suggesting in public comments that skinny towers with lots of open space will result from these changes. This appears to be entirely false.

11

These rezones should be conditioned to protect existing low income housing from being lost to redevelopment, particularly where there is a history of public subsidy of these rental units.

12

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this DEIS which is a very informative and provocative document.

Sincerely,

Irene Wall

c: City Council

Gordon Clowers - Feedback on Downtown Development: Studying Possible Changes

From: "David Williams" <dfw23@hotmail.com>
To: <gordon.clowers@seattle.gov>
Date: 1/23/2004 11:33 AM
Subject: Feedback on Downtown Development: Studying Possible Changes

Hi Gordon, the web page at <http://www.seattle.gov/DCLU/Planning/Commdev/Downtown/default.asp> doesn't make it clear who we should contact with our input on the Downtown Development Studying Possible Changes to Height and Density Limits. Please forward my input to the appropriate person.

My Input: I support taller narrower residential towers in some or all of the downtown neighborhoods as a way to prevent the building of more broad and squat buildings and to increase residential density downtown. I support changes that will make the downtown neighborhoods more liveable.

Thanks,
David Williams
316 11th Ave E
Seattle, WA 98102
206-329-2009

1